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ROCKS AND RIVERS;

OR,

HIGHLAND WANDERINGS

OVER CRAG AND CORREI, "FLOOD AND FELL."

BY JOHN COLQUHOUN, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF "THE MOOR AND THE LOCH."

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"There the light of evening lies
Longer than in Southern skies;
There the dreary dark pine woods
Frown o'er watery solitudes."

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1849.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following irregular sketches of wild expeditions, now loosely thrown together, were begun in the year 1841. They were penned just as they occurred, often at long intervals. Those which were thought likely to be of more general interest have been selected from among many others.

The Author has also derived pleasure from noting down any incidents in natural history which engaged his attention, and recommends the practice to all those who may enjoy the same opportunities for observing them.

JUNE, 1849.

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CORRACH-BAH; OR, A PLEA FOR THE WASTES.

How shrunk are Scotland's rugged untamed desolations! We see those mushroom larch plantations skirting the steeps of our brown mountains, with their luxuriant verdure. The subsoil plough, tile-draining, and all the ingenious etceteras of modern invention, have reclaimed many a bleak and barren moor which once only served for pasture to the hardy black cattle, the unhoused hirsel of the hills. Thriving fields of yellow grain, and glancing sickles, and merry voices, swelling the autumn gale, now enliven those wastes once the chosen haunts of the bittern and the whaup. Many of the lords of the heather, themselves, have caught the improvement mania, and either modernize their "own great tower"* or pull it down; building a splendid

* "Fortunately for mankind, as some counterbalance to that wretched love of novelty, which originates in selfishness, narrowness, and conceit, and *which especially characterises all vulgar minds*, there is set in the deeper places of the heart such affection for the signs of age, that the eye is delighted even by injuries which are the work of time."—*Modern Painters, by a Graduate of Oxford.*

mansion in its honoured stead. The wild feudo-Highland grounds and scenery must, of course, be made to fit this upstart of a house, and many a knoll, covered with its tangled brushwood, and blazing with the yellow gold of the whin and the broom, must be levelled and swept away to convert the whole into an English lawn.

In addition to this we have the new law of entail, which will go a good way to destroy our famed nationality; and by introducing monied strangers who know nothing, and feel less of sympathy with the Highland character, will (unwittingly, perhaps) do all they can to extirpate it altogether. It is melancholy to hear some "nouveaux riches" at radical meetings spouting forth their untutored volubility upon this (to me) painful subject—"If the hereditary feudal lairds and lords cannot improve their estates, they ought to sell them to those who can!"—to those pioneers of civilization, whose chief idea of a Highland estate is that of a *good bargain*, and whose notion of raising the Highland character consists in assimilating it to their own! They may give employment, and money for money's worth, but all their efforts will be unavailing to transform the Gael into their beau idéal of a peasant, and never can they gain that place in his heart, only to be occupied by his feudal chief of ages past. Our Queen better knew her northern people, when, upon her first memorable visit to this *land of Catarans*, she, like the great chieftainess, cast herself freely, fully, upon the unbought devotion of her clans.

Perhaps I feel too strongly on this subject, and I know I am open to the remark that feudalism implies dependence, while no feeling of that sort is compatible with improvement in character or country. But are we sure that *all*

we term improvement is more than simply alteration? And is there one mountain-born son of Albyn who will not agree with me in preferring our unspoiled, unplanted glens, our wild game, and our national distinctness, to all the busy important bustle of modern civilization, which has already transformed many of our most romantic nooks into models of "suburban villas." I well recollect offering to show an exquisite specimen of real Highland taste and beauty, with all its wild character preserved, to a worthy metropolitan: his answer was, "Ah, thumthing in the Englith thtyle!!" He had ascended Ben Lomond shortly before, the day lovely, only a few light clouds flitting over the brown heath or scattered rocks, between long intervals of brilliant sunshine: the lights and shadows upon the opposite mountains seemed formed to call up feelings and recollections long gone by. Our citizen, however, returned vastly delighted at having rather called up so good an appetite for dinner. After having satisfied his craving, he abruptly broke out, "Would it be pothible to fill up Loch Lomond?" His own genius anticipated the reply: "Ah! by tumbling Ben Lomond into it, I thuppothe! Now, how many acres of good land would you gain?" Well, thought I, this is improvement with a vengeance, and I should, with great pleasure, have pitched in his little fat body, by way of a sleeping partner to the doomed mountain! However, upon thinking over his strange proposal, it struck me that it was a plain, matter-of-fact, pounds, shillings and pence view of the subject; and, if I was fairly attacked upon that point, I should not stand half a chance in the argument. No doubt the country will be richer, the more it is cultivated; but few Highlanders, with any touch of imagination, would barter, even for this, its former

lonely and desolate grandeur, with its accompaniments of wild birds and animals; or would, without a pang, change the bold heart and ready hand of the natives into those of passive and obedient serfs. If driven to make a choice, I must shelter myself under the shrewd logic of a fellow countryman, who, having affirmed that the grapes of Scotland were better than those of England, and being asked to prove it, coolly answered, "I maun premeese, I like them soor!" Like him, I must also premise, that I would not give the frowning crag, or barren fell, for all the rich slopes and verdant valleys of the Lowlands.

There are two kinds of wild scenery pre-eminently deserving the epithet "sublime;" but to feel their overpowering effect, they must be seen with every associated object. You cannot view the sea-cliff in perfection unless there is nothing before you but the boundless, fathomless ocean. An arm of the sea, or a firth, will not do; their waves are never those rolling, booming surges, which impress one with the vastness from which they come. There must also be the countless variety of sea-birds *, some thickly studding every jagged projection, and others riding the swelling billow, their bright plumage glancing in the beams of the morning sun. My greater favourite, however, is the wild and lonely mountain, with its crags, its bare heath, its solitary moor-loch, and above all the eyrie of

* The white-tailed eagle, or erne, not unfrequently hatches on the overhanging rocks of the sea, and by her gallant swoops and screams, when her territory is invaded, adds much to the impression of wildness and grandeur. As congenial a haunt for its nidification is the island of a moor-loch, if there are any old trees to fix the eyrie upon; finding its hunting-ground in the neighbouring morasses; whence it has acquired the name of the Bog-Eagle.

the golden eagle, dread monarch of the mist. Spring is the season to enjoy both in perfection, as all the winged tenants have then taken possession of their temporary abodes. Every variety may be seen and studied; while from their tameness a nearer view may be obtained than at any other time. Few springs have passed without my enjoying either a marine or mountain treat, sometimes both, and the pleasure has then been heightened by contrast. A slight sketch of one of these later excursions may perhaps be admissible here.

In the recesses of the Black Mount Forest, very considerably above the level of the sea, there is a muirland lochan, about a mile long by half a mile broad, called in Gaelic, Lochan Nahachalach; and a little to the east, connected by a rocky brook, is Loch Bah (the Drowning Loch), about three miles long by a mile broad. The shores of these lochs, if shores they may be called, which consist of an occasional strip of yellow sand, are seldom trodden by any foot but that of the wild deer or the otter. Jagged points of rock continually obtrude themselves above the blue-grey water, and the eyrie of the sea-eagle fixed upon the top of an old birch, on a rugged heathery islet of Loch Bah, while another eyrie graces an aged Scotch fir of Loch Nahachalach, complete a picture so exquisitely savage that fancy in its wildest mood could scarcely alter or amend. On the south these lochs are bounded by an extensive morass, full of small tarns, intersected by a pretty large muir-burn; and on the east of Loch Nahachalach a steep craggy hill rises abruptly from its side. An eyrie of the golden eagle is placed on a shelf of rock half-way up, and I have enjoyed the rare luxury of seeing both eyries at the same moment, and both queens in un-

disturbed possession of their throne. Seldom any collision took place, each having her favourite hunting-ground. There was the mountain for the nobler bird, and the morass for her more vulture-shaped neighbour. They sometimes, however, had a battle in the air, but the looser form, the heavier movement, and the less daring spirit of the erne, made her no match for the mountaineer, who soon drove her screaming to her island.

In the distance may be discerned the dark forms of mountains belonging to that range called Corrach-Bah, a very favourite resort of the golden eagle. The correis which intersect them afford the richest pasture for the deer; and the hill-fox, the wild-cat, and the marten are not yet banished from those desolate precipices. It is not to be inferred, however, that the deer-forest is also a preserve for vermin. There is many a splendid hunt after the marten or the fox, which taxes the mettle both of men and dogs. And although there often are only the hounds and their quarry upon the bare mountains, and the echoes of the rocks to cheer them on, yet, to a lover of the pure picturesque, it is worth a hundred Lowland fox-hunts, with their red coats, horns, huntsmen, whippers, and all! Nor are the eagles allowed to increase beyond a certain limit, as each pair consumes no inconsiderable number of red-deer calves as well as other game. But Lord Breadalbane has too much of the Highland heart to grudge this, or to wish, like some other proprietors, to extirpate our truly national bird.

It was towards the end of April, 1845, that, armed with my duck-gun to storm one of these eagle fortresses, I

sailed in the Loch Goil steamboat, on my way to these favourite haunts. I had also put up two trolling-rods in compliment to the salmo-feroxes of Loch Awe. We left the Bromie-law at seven o'clock on a fresh sunny morning, and paddled merrily down the Clyde. The fat rosy steward, with his quaint face of good-nature, was in high feather, and frequent in his assurances that we might expect "a pleesant sail." Under his auspices we were soon seated at a good breakfast of whitings taken out of the firth the night before. By the time we had discussed them, we were coasting the shingly beach of Loch Long; and having touched at Arden Tinny, and viewed the fairy land of Glenfinert, its emerald lawn, and rampart of brown hill and tangled wood, we struck into the bleak Loch Goil. A short time brought us alongside of its primitive quay, where we deposited ourselves and luggage in the mongrel kind of a coach, half boat, half omnibus, which was to convey us across the isthmus, separating Loch Goil from Loch Fine. Creeping up one side of the hill at a tortoise pace, we rattled down the other at a gallop, by way of a change. A very small steamboat plies between St. Catrine's and Inverary, and I was in the act of superintending the embarkation of my chattels, when a bustling official assured me that he would see them all safe. I put faith in him, and immediately began a discussion with two fellow-travellers about the whale that had been harpooned shortly before in the loch—or the hill of Dunnequaigh—or the Duke's Castle—or I don't recollect what. Upon landing at Inverary my trolling-rods were missing, and no "satisfaction" to be had, as my officious friend was safe on the opposite shore, and my poor rods lying within tide-water mark! The landlord of the Argyle Arms, however, obligingly offered to send the

ferry-boat and forward them next morning by the post* to Cladich, where I hoped to bivouac for a few days after my eagle campaign.

Having dined with my two agreeable companions, we hired an open carriage, and drove to Cladich, where we parted, they going on to Oban by Port Sonachan, and I to the Black Mount. After a long, rugged, but enjoyable drive, partly along the banks of Loch Awe, where the cuckoo was heard in every dell, or seen poising himself upon some still leafless patriarchal thorn, and partly through the environs of the forest, I arrived at the solitary little inn of Inveruran. The Forester's house was within a short distance, so I arranged with him that we should start by daylight next morning for the eagle's eyrie, partook of Highland cheer in a snug little Cyclops of a parlour ornamented with the horns of the red-deer, and then retired to my dormitory.

Day was just breaking when I crossed the river Tulla, on my way to Peter Robertson's cottage. He was standing before his door, consoling himself for his early start by a pipe of very strong tobacco. The morning was all we could wish,—calm, grey, and mild. As we passed the banks of the loch, roe-deer were quietly cropping the greensward which sloped to the water's edge, and now and then a fine

* Generally a stout hale carle, of middle age, who walks from ten to fifteen miles and back again in a day, with the mail-beg slung at his back. The first time one of these primitive posts was dignified with a little gig equipage, he came in late, and made excuse that "he was 'tagled wi' a gig!" Of course he was turned off. Poor Sandy Bell had walked twenty-seven miles a day for thirty years of his life, and at his dismissal was fresh as May. He bitterly complained that he lost, first his bread, "by they new-fangled nonsense," and then his health, for want of exercise. He is only an instance among many who have been ruined by *cutting a dash.*

buck would raise his head and look listlessly over his shoulder, as if wondering what business we had to be so soon astir. The black-cock, surrounded by his hens, was crooning his antics on the tops of the knolls, and was answered by the red-cock with many a cheery but eccentric call, from the more distant heights. A male hen-harrier was flitting stealthily above the heather, seeking his breakfast where it would be easily found, with small chance of human company at his morning meal. Now and then an Alpine hare would canter lazily away, or raise herself upon her hind legs to listen, moving about her inquisitive ears.

For some miles we walked along the road which intersects the lower end of the forest, when Peter suddenly turned into its gloomy depths. Small flocks of deer now crossed us frequently, and sometimes a large herd would saunter past at a slow walk. Occasionally we saw their profiles on the crests of the mountains, or at feed, dotted along some distant correi, in appearance no bigger than roes.

Peter had been entertaining me with many a hunting anecdote, or with the natural history of some of the wild denizens of the forest, when the first streak of the rising sun struck the gaunt head of a bald cliff in the centre of the mountains of Corrach-Bah. "Now, sir," suiting the action to the word, "in that craig is your eagle." A threatening crag it was; from the view I got, it seemed as steep as the side of a house from top to bottom. For the first time I felt a slight misgiving, lest the shot might be crank and difficult, when the bird flew out of such a rugged mass. What if I should miss! However, I banished these craven thoughts, and marched on merrily as before.

We were still a long mile from our rocks, when a dark bird rose in the midst of them, and winged his way to the opposite mountain. Was he a buzzard? No, small as he appears, that determined flight, and free flap of the wing, can belong to no bird but the eagle. Peter looked carelessly at him. "Yon 's the cock, he 'll be for the opposite hill, after bringing the hen her breakfast." He now whipped out his glass, and placing his back upon a hillock, and the glass upon his knee, looked long and anxiously through it. At last, jumping up, shutting the glass with a satisfied jerk, and looking to me with a smile, "She 's on, sir." I now took his place, but it was some time, in spite of Peter's minute directions, before I could discern the eyrie. "Look, sir, to the side o' yon bushes in the face o' the craig." 'Twas easy enough to see *them*, they seemed "moored" not "in the *rifted*" but *solid* "rock." When I at length detected the eyrie, it appeared no bigger than a rook's nest, and how Robertson had discovered "she was on" I was a good deal puzzled to find out. But he told me to keep my eye upon the east side of the nest, and I should see a black ball which would seem higher at some times than others, and was caused by the eagle's raising her head. My qualms returned; I saw that the eyrie was about thirty yards down in the cliff, that my footing would not be firm, and that if the bird were so inclined, she might dash into the abyss with the speed of the wind. Peter, however, was talkative as ever, evidently in high glee that there was every chance of a shot.

We now struck off to the left, as if walking away from the eyrie. Having taken a long circuit, we edged in, till we got a slope of the mountain between us and our quarry.

This achieved, we walked rapidly round till we came to its base, at the opposite side to that where the noble bird was sitting in perfect security and peace. Peter now climbed slowly up, continuing his stories to most inattentive ears. I had some faint recollection, afterwards, of a curious bird with extraordinary feet, which frequented the forest, whose history he was relating with great animation just when he gained the ridge of the mountain. There, however, all his tales were at an end. He at once relapsed into the cool and wary hunter. Creeping forward with promptitude and decision, he knew, to an inch, where to look for the eyrie among all that fantastic chaos of rocks. Beckoning me to advance, he showed the outer sticks of the nest, and pointed to a rock close to us, where lay a grouse nearly devoured, and a ptarmigan beautifully picked, but with the skin unbroken. Our attack upon the eagle began by plundering her storehouse; for Peter, rolling up the ptarmigan in his handkerchief, pocketed it as a *bonne bouche* for dinner. We now held a consultation as to the easiest way of approach. Scrambling down a hollow, we were within fifty yards of the eyrie, when a ravine intercepted our progress. I pointed to a little bank of ochre-coloured moss beyond. "That's the place," whispered Peter. Back we ducked again, over the same ground, and, crawling along the ridge, evaded the ravine. The critical moment of failure or success was now arrived. With my left knee on the bank of moss, and my right foot planted against a rock, to prevent a slip on the steep,—my eye fixed on the outer rim of the eyrie, and Peter, mute as a stone but sharp as an arrow, awaiting the signal,—I stopped a moment to take breath. A slight nod over my shoulder, and Peter gently struck the palms of his hands together,

pat—pat. It was just enough for the eagle to hear, but it seemed very loud to me. Pat—pat—pat, louder and louder. I was now getting very nervous. "Throw a stone at her!" Peter had too much generalship for that. He selected a small pebble, and threw it on the steep, directly above the eyrie. I watched every hop of the stone, lower and lower, till I saw that it must drop straight upon our victim. I knew it was now or never. Instantly, I caught sight of the bold flap of a giant wing, and the mighty bird soared majestically from the dizzy chasm. The shot was not difficult. I may say, that my aim was cool and determined. She reeled round and round, and fell headlong into the yawning abyss, quite dead. I now took a long breath, and but for Peter's delighted face, could scarcely persuade myself she had fallen. If he had either hallooed loud, or thrown straight at the eagle, she would most likely have dashed out, wheeling and tumbling —an uncertain and difficult shot. Fain would I have secured the eggs, but this was impossible without ropes, which we had neglected to bring. Peter, however, offered to send them to Cladich the next day.

I was now impatient to secure my prize. We had to descend the sloping ridge, and come round in front, at the base of the chasm. It was, certainly, a lordly fortress—fit abode for this marauding Thane of the Wastes. Flanked by bastions and buttresses of massy rock, which guarded the stronghold on either side, and keeping watch upon its rugged eminence, the eagle's sleepless eye could detect the most minute or distant object in the valley beneath.

We searched the rough ground at the foot of the precipice for some time, without discovering the dead eagle.

Indeed, we both fancied that she had dropped much further off than was actually the case. At last I discovered the red-brown feathers, like a large tuft of her own heather, close to the foot of the cliff. A finer specimen could not be seen; the markings were perfect, and the plumage in the finest order.

The sun had now risen high and clear, the surrounding mountains looked low, warm, and blue. I was now gay as Peter, and, while we tramped over moor and moss, I made him repeat his forest tales. I found that the "extraordinary feat" he had so minutely described, belonged to the night-jar, which bird, however, is rarer in the forest than in more cultivated localities. Some of his anecdotes of eagles are really worth notice, as illustrating the strength and ferocity of the bird. A couple, cock and hen, were trapped at the same bait by Robertson. As they were not seriously injured, he wished to bring them home alive. This would have been an impossibility to most people, as there is but one way of carrying them with any degree of safety: it is by placing the enormous creature under your arm, and holding his legs, immediately above the huge claws, firmly in your hand. As long as you walk steadily, and do not shake him roughly, the eagle will remain still, and make no effort to escape. But, if you stumble, or turn sharply round, it is ten to one that he fixes his talons to the bone in your thigh. Robertson was carrying the two birds in this manner, and, having come a long way, his arms became cramped, and he was trying to relieve them by leaning upon a stone dyke, when one of the savage creatures struck its claw into his leg. The pain was great, but he knew that, if he attempted to extricate himself, he would lose both birds. So, Spartan like, he

patiently waited till some assistance should turn up. On looking down the road, he saw a pack-man slowly padding along, but, in trying to accelerate his professional pace by a loud shout, he shook the hen bird, and she immediately repeated the attack on his other thigh. He was now fairly pinioned, and the pain scarcely bearable. At last the pedlar came up, but his horror was so great at poor Peter's predicament, that he only stared in blank dismay. "Toot, man, tak' my knife oot o' my pocket, and cut open this beast's claw." This was done with some difficulty. "Noo gang round on the ither side an' ye'll fin' anither job." The man, who had no idea that Peter was grappled on both sides, quickly obeyed, muttering, "Saw I ever sic sorrows in a' ma life!" Both eagles were brought safe home, but Peter assured me that he was unable to walk for many a day.

Another story of a prisoned eagle vindicating his dignity has so much of the comic about it, that we forgive the savage revenge. A raw-boned Highlandman came to Robertson's house:—"Is your faither at hame?"—"No," said one of his children. "Has na he a tame aigle?" The little girl pointed out the place where it was confined. There was a hole cut at the bottom of the door, where its food was thrown in; Donald peered cautiously into the hole; quick as light, the eagle seized his nose, and it was only by a severe struggle, and the cartilage giving way, that he effected his escape. When Peter came home, he found him sitting in a doleful plight, but, having comforted him with a dram, and patched up his nose with sticking plaster, he sent him away with his curiosity quite cured about eagles.

I mention one more, to show the power of the bird when

a mere nestling. Peter and two shepherds had gone to take an eaglet from the nest. The eyrie was a little way from the top of the cliff. Peter descended to it by a rope, one of the shepherds was a little above him, and the other, who had a very weak head, stipulated for a secure berth at the top. Peter passed the eaglet to the first man, who, in like manner, gave it safely to him at the top. But, he having most likely given it a nervous twitch, it seized him fiercely. Down he fell on his back, dread of toppling over into the abyss drowning all sense of pain. Up came the other shepherd, but when he saw the man moaning and helpless, he was seized with such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that he could give no assistance. When Peter reached the top, he drew man and eaglet upon firm ground, and then extricated the claw. As soon as he found himself upon level ground, and free, he rushed at his jocose neighbour, and Peter had some difficulty to prevent a battle. It was a mortal affront to mention an eagle in this man's presence ever after.

But we have now got back to Peter's cottage. Loch Tulla is glistering under a burning sun: I see the landlord at Inveruran slily peeping round the corner, anxious to discover whether we had returned empty-handed. My appetite also warns me that it is past nine; so, having appeased it by a subsoil of "halesome parritch," and a top-dressing of fresh eggs, "Now, landlord, out with the 'shan-dra-dam.'"*

My jolting drive to Cladich in my "chariot" was not over till towards two o'clock, but the keen air of the moun-

* The name given by a rural minister of the kirk, who sported one of these vehicles, to a little spring cart with a seat across for the "dames." His servant would persist, in spite of him, to call it his "*chariot*."

tains had completely effaced the recollection of my solid breakfast. I therefore ordered a mutton-chop, and went to the shore to examine my craft. I had already bespoken the services of old Sandy McKenzie, "wha kens whar the big fish lie as weel as ony man on Loch Ow side." Sandy, being appointed skipper, begged to be allowed to choose his own crew, which consisted of a stout, good-natured "callant" of about sixteen, yclept "Johnny,"—occasionally "Jock," when Sandy was in a patronizing mood. Sandy was once a strong bony man, and piqued himself upon being one of the best wrestlers in the country. Now his eye is dim and filmy, much the colour of a boiled onion, and his athletic arm is paralytic and weak as a child's. I might have had far abler men at the oar, and as knowing about the haunts of the fish; but whenever I troll Loch Awe, none but that poor, ragged, woe-begone old man shall command my boat so long as he is able to do it.

Having satisfied myself that the "cobbles" were not *more* leaky than they generally are, I returned to the inn. Monzie's keeper had been there to see my eagle, so I asked his leave to shoot a couple of ring dotterels which were tippeting on a green bank close to the boats. This he at once civilly agreed to. All was now ready for the evening fishing. Johnny carried my trolling-rods; Sandy a "cogue-fu'" of live bait, and a little basket of provisions; and I my duck-gun loaded with No. 6 for the dotterels. Poor little fellows! They looked so pretty that it was a shame to fire at them. But as I had no specimen in my collection, I could not resist the temptation of stringing both at a shot. One lay, but the other being only wing-broken, ran into the water with so light and graceful a step, it seemed as if walking on glass.

The rods were soon baited, the evening was perfect for fishing, and the feroxes took well. We came over no large ones, however, and the three brought into the boat were only four, three, and two and a half pounds. We had intended to troll to the bay of old Castle Connal, eight miles down the loch, built, as Sandy says, by the Danes, but were obliged to defer it till next day. The bay which this castle commands is a famous resort of the largest size of the ferox. When we fish it, Sandy always tells a story of one of the Lochiels, who had been taken captive by a hostile clan, and confined there. His jailor had an annuity during his lifetime. The Camerons, however, found out where he was concealed, and came down in a body. As soon as the wretch saw them, he stabbed him with his penknife, having no other weapon at hand, expecting a reward for his atrocity, which, no doubt, he received.

Night overtook us before we could gain the harbour of Cladich, alias the burn foot, which is the only safe anchorage in case of a storm. And, indeed, it is very difficult to bring up a boat anywhere else, the coast being so shallow. The entrance to this burn is so intricate, that a man rowing in and out every day may be completely puzzled after dark. "Johnny," by some hieroglyphic shadowy marks of the trees upon the water, known only to himself, at last piloted us safely through, and was "Jock, my man" till we got to the inn.

The old dun eight-day clock had just "chapped" seven, when my gallant crew cleared out of harbour, and, with my rods, bait, provisions, and pea-jacket, were making for Port Sonachan Quay, where I had directed them to meet me. The morning was colder, the wind had changed

from west to east, "a bad airt" for the fish. There were certain appearances also in the sky, which foreboded squally weather. The best of the fishing-ground is below Port Sonachan, so I did not wish to waste time on such an unpropitious day, until we got there. I sauntered dreamily along, admiring the views as they unfolded themselves, and had sat for some time on Port Sonachan shore, listening to a chorus of cuckoos, before the measured stroke of Sandy and Johnny appeared at some distance, slowly propelling their clumsy boat. I question if I gained much time by my manœuvre, though Sandy appeared quite satisfied with the rate of their progress. I was soon seated in the stern, with lovely baits towing behind. "No a rug," as Sandy repeatedly said; but he endeavoured, poor fellow, to keep up our spirits by telling a tale of every wood, hill, or rock we crept slowly past. "There 's the badger's rock, sir; he has never left it for the last fifty year." The grey hermit of the rock called me back to my boyish days. The "brock-holes" in the oak wood—the traps my brothers and I had purloined from the old keeper, who preferred killing vermin by the lazy method of the gun—my delight when I detected the first poor captured badger—all rose fresh before me, as in those sunny mornings of life's early spring. My brothers and I had been brought up in the country, and were hunters from our childhood. Our couple of terriers were game as flint, and yet they were never able to draw a badger from his natural fastness. I have heard them hold one to bay for hours, in the inmost recesses of his earth. On one occasion, when a favourite terrier had teazed the poor animal for a long time, it slily followed, and when the dog was within a yard of the hole's en-

trance, bit his hind leg to the bone. This harassing the rear of a retreating enemy, showed tactics on the part of the old grey friar that we could scarcely have expected. I once brought home a half-grown cub, which had wandered from the hole, rolling it up in my jacket. (What will not boys do?) It soon became so tame, as to eat beetles and humble-bees from our hands, and would lap up porridge and milk like a dog. I well recollect—for it was a job that cost us no small trouble—digging out an old she one. To the last she kept the dogs at bay, and even when we heard the growl within a couple of yards, they were unable to dislodge her. Whenever we struck into the wide cell, they dashed in upon her, and inflicted such injury that she soon died. There were two cubs, about a week old, which made a low chirping squeak. The cell where they were was round, hard, and dry, about two feet in height, by four or five yards in circumference. There was no food in it. Many a badger we trapped, and I verily believe were as proud of the brock-holes, as an Indian chief of his finest hunting-ground. Those that we trapped soon learned to take part of the dogs' supper. We never saw them eat grass or hay, and should as soon have thought of giving such food to a dog, as insulting them with it. What they call "badger's hay-making" is neither more nor less than the routing up the moss, which they are obliged to do to get at beetles, grubs, &c., among its roots. This dries, and the badger brings home a little for its winter bed. We used to notice as much of this hay made as would suffice for a good-sized stack, and more than would fill up every badger's hole in the country. I need scarcely say that what they carried was never missed.

My reveries were now broken by Sandy pointing out the nest of the "salmon-tailed gled," and there are the owners wheeling their graceful circles. Two roes were also looking at us from the shore, and another a little further on. They seemed not the least afraid, as we pulled slowly past. I was admiring the beautiful hanging wood, in which the kite's nest held a prominent place near the top of one of the finest old oaks, when a pull, that bent my rod's top to the water, and spun round my large wooden pirn, brought me to my legs at a spring. To seize the rod and place the butt above my knee, with a good bend at the top, was the work of an instant. Sandy was also active; he gave both oars to Johnny, and began, with his shaky hands, to wind up the other rod out of the way, in case of a collision. I had told him always to do so when I hooked a trout. At this moment the gorgeous fish sprang a yard out of the water, coming down with a splash that made the rocks echo. Sandy, at no time very expert, became quite nervous at sight of the monster, and bungled his work sadly. I gave him a push out of my way, and in so doing, knocked off his tattered hat into the water at the bottom of the cobble. He only smiled, without a vestige of anger. I saw his thin grey hair, and am happy to recollect that at that exciting moment, ashamed of my impatience, I picked up his hat with my left hand, and placed it on his head, poor Sandy all the time begging me "never to heed it." Sandy's whole heart was in the capture of the fish. His rod was by this time wound up, he was again at the oar, and I had fair play. The ferox bored like a harpooned whale; sometimes he would change his course and go down to the bottom, taking forty

yards of line, which he made swirl through the water with a humming noise, like a low sound of the telegraph wires. When I shook him up, he would fight away for the middle of the loch. At length he grew weaker, and I got him under command of a short line. It was a beautiful sight —that noble fish, sometimes showing his glancing scales for a moment, and then trying to bore under the boat, and always foiled by the boatmen, who promptly obeyed my slightest signal. He now began really to fail, and I felt I could lead him, so, directing Sandy to a shingly part of the shore, where there were no rocks, I determined to land him there. The beach was very shallow, and, in spite of my remonstrances, Sandy walked up to his knees in water, and drew the cobble ashore. I was now on terra firma, but my fish was by no means done up yet. Every time that I brought him to the shallow, he dashed away with as much vigour as before. This could not last, and the bursts became shorter and slower, till my victim was unable to get down at all, and only struggled on the top of the water. I had ample opportunity to admire his dimensions, colour, and shape, and was determined that no rashness or eagerness to obtain it should rob me of so rich a prize. At last he turned upon his broad and gleaming side. Now was my time. And like a wrecked and gallant vessel he lay stranded on the beach!

A proud man was Sandy McKenzie then. He took entire possession of the fish, and would hardly let Johnny look at it; if he ventured to touch it, he met a stern rebuke. Well did Sandy know how rare it was to come across a trout of that size in Loch Awe now-a-days, and all the fishing guides there are as proud of their gentlemen's performances as if they were their own. They

reckon their honour concerned, and banter each other about the failure of their employers as reflecting upon their own want of knowledge of the haunts of the fish.

We now sat down upon a green bank, close to the gled's nest wood, and had out our little basket of refreshments. I gave Sandy a plentiful supply for both. "Now, Sandy, eat your fill, and give Johnny the leavings." This is a favourite joke with Sandy, and Johnny is obliged to shield himself from its point by chuckling as heartily as he can. The Glenlivat was now uncorked; and when I was taking my modicum, mixed with the clear water of the spring, I overheard Johnny complaining of the scarcity of the "sma' stells which were ance thick eneuch on Loch Ow," and reprobating the tyranny of our rulers, "wha hinnered folk frae doin' what they liket best theirsels wi' their ain pickle barley." Sandy likes his whiskey raw, but is "*very fond o' a drap water after 't!*" The first time I gave him a glass into his paralytic hand, he spilt about two-thirds. I now insist upon holding the glass to his mouth myself. This indignity Sandy resisted at first, but I was peremptory, and he now contrives to keep me between him and Johnny, who is slily keeking round. When he has got his glass, however, he seems to think it a good job well over, and occasionally attempts some wit. I never like to see his sorrowful face then, or even to hear his joke; it seems as if uttered in bitterness of heart.

I could not resist having a peep into the kite's nest. She had no eggs yet, but all was ready for them, plenty of soft warm odds and ends for the lining. The two birds, balancing themselves at a great height above, kept strict watch over our movements. It is a great pity that the

kite has become so rare, for it always gives a sort of finishing touch to our pine-clothed hills.

The breeze had freshened. The squalls had settled into a steady gale, and we were upwards of eight miles from Cladich. I wished, at least, to try some of the best ground on our way home, having little hope of pulling the whole distance against such a head wind; Sandy, however, was unable to make any way, and upon Johnny's complaining that the boat was drifting back, fairly gave in. I had always relieved the old man when we had to cross the loch, or go quickly past bad fishing-ground, upon which occasions I used to hear Johnny taunting him. When I took the oar, Sandy always had his revenge, by "You 've met your match noo, lad." Since it was impossible to fish any of the way back, I dried my lines along the shore, and determined to enjoy the lonely walk to the inn. The road for some miles was a steep mountain track, which seemed only fitted for a flock of goats. On some parts of this dismal region the sun seldom shines, and on others never a ray penetrates, summer or winter. The whole hill was studded with jagged rock and stone, and a more dreary path could hardly be imagined. Gloomy without grandeur. Slowly we plodded to accommodate poor old Sandy, whose short breath effectually stopped his wild legends.

We had nearly gained the summit, from which there is a distant view of the loch, when Johnny, who had sauntered on a few paces before, stopped suddenly, and pointing to a little bing of stones: "This is the Tinkler's Cairn." "'Deed, no," says Sandy, with an air of superior knowledge, "*I'll* show the Tinkler's Cairn." And stumping on a few paces further, "This is the very bit where the

tinkler was murdered." I felt a thrill of horror. A more appropriate place for a deed of blood could not have been chosen; it looked like haunted ground, so bleak, and bare, and lonely, with its stern rocks of perpetual gloom. After carefully examining the little cairn of stones, which is always reared over the spot where a dead body is found upon the mountains, I asked Sandy to relate the story, the substance of which is as follows. A tinker and his termagant wife had long travelled the country. He was much older than his wife, who was a woman of immense muscular power, and nearly six feet high. "The puir body," said Sandy, "had little peace wi' her. A perfect she-deevil was Kirsty; I kent her weel. Mony a day after the deed was done she travelled the country, and her sons are to the fore yet." One day they left Cladich, and took their course over this mountain, in the way of their trade. From what motive is not known, but when they came to this spot, she seized a stone, murdered her wretched husband, then coolly walked on to the next sheeling, where she slept, and in the morning pursued her way through the hills. A shepherd soon after discovered the poor tinker, lying stark and gory upon his cold hard bed. The woman was taken up, but dismissed for want of evidence. Life was held light in the Highlands in those days, and soon little was said or thought about the poor lost tinker or his tyrant mate.

I felt relieved to quit this dismal scene, and to descend the more sunny side of the hill. We were now threading the waving woods of Sonachan and Rock Hill, where the blithe mavis was pouring its evening melody from the topmost bough of many a tall pine or shadowy beech. I took the opportunity of explaining to Johnny that the

large "stells" paid a deal o' money to government, which they could not do if the little ones were allowed to compete and pay nothing; that government paid an army with this money to keep the French from coming over, and taking him where he would never see a glass of whiskey more: that if he objected to pay soldiers in this way, he must e'en go and be a "soger" himself for nothing, to prevent the aforesaid French inroad. This last piece of logic evidently had some effect; and I question if Johnny will long for the strong waters of "Loch Ow'," the next time he is so fortunate as to be presented with a glass from the large "stells" of Glenlivat or Glen Islay.

Arrived at Cladich, my first step was to order in the weighing machine, when my fish proved 15½ lbs. odd, so must have been nearly sixteen when taken out of the water. I had killed in Loch Vennacher, the year before, with single gut, a clean salmon which weighed seventeen pounds when brought home. This salmon did not make near so fierce a run as the Loch Awe trout with gimp. I have heard gentlemen speak slightingly of the best trout when compared with salmon; but let them have one of these Loch Awe monsters on their hooks, in as good condition as mine was, and I venture to say they will not complain of the want of mettle in the trout. I have no doubt that the salmo-ferox is superior, both in strength and spirit, to the salmo-salar. Unless the ferox is in first-rate condition, his head is very ugly, and looks much too large for his body. This was not the case with the specimen I have just described; his head is smaller, and his shoulder more round than any I have ever taken; on which account he is now stuffed, and may be seen at Fenton's, in George Street, Edinburgh.

I took the road at five next morning, to be in time for the Inverary steam-boat, which left at seven; but, even at that early hour, poor Sandy, with his fragment of a hat in his hand, was waiting at the "brae-fit" to wish me a "gude journey." Having shaken him heartily by the hand, I turned my back, for a time, upon these cherished scenes of beauty, grandeur, and romance.

SALMON ANGLING.

I SHALL hope to be pardoned if I claim for fishing the appellation of a science. I have never considered it, like shooting, a mere art. At all events, it has certainly not yet been brought to perfection; and the more able the angler, the more willingly will he admit, that not a season passes without his acquiring fresh secrets which he is not over-solicitous to tell. If a man fancies he can jump into proficiency after a season or two's practice, he is vastly mistaken; it is not a few fishing excursions, now and then, that form the adept, but the heedful experience of years. Take an instance; and suppose a man to be expert in the knack of throwing a line;—he is angling down a fine salmon stream, followed by a finished master of the fly, and has just completed his last throw of a promising pool. Upon looking over his shoulder, his companion has hold of a good fish, at the very part of the cast on which he had bestowed the most care and pains: he immediately suspects that his comrade has been more knowing in the choice of a fly. But, when the salmon is landed, he discovers, to his amazement, that it was attracted by a facsimile of the identical fly which a moment before he had so dexterously tendered to its acceptance! Every really first-rate fly-fisher will meet with such occurrences, when angling in the wake of a less gifted craftsman. And although to the

looker-on it appears as if he had charmed the fish, yet it is only by a more scientific knowledge of the *exact* spots where the salmon are likely to come up, and *lingering* over these with the motion of a glancing insect. This mastery of the gentle craft can only be attained by long practice and the most perfect command of the rod.

Angling for salmon may be called the deer-stalking of the streams. As in the first sight of the herd there is more excitement, and more satisfaction when you bring down the stag than any other game, so in salmon-fishing, compared with all other kinds, the interest is greater when you rise a fish, and the satisfaction double when you lay him on the shingly bank. Like deer-stalking, however, it has its disadvantages; not the least of which is, the greater stock of patience required, and the greater uncertainty of the sport; unless, indeed, in preserved waters, where there is much less opportunity of displaying the superiority of an accomplished fisher over the ordinary performer. In unprotected water, for instance, should the weather be unpropitious, the best rod may flog the river for hours without stirring a fin; while a couple of fish is always reckoned a good day's work. Under the same untoward circumstances, the trout-fisher may often, by skill and perseverance, make out a very tolerable bagful.

I have heard it said by some pseudo salmon-anglers, that the only pleasure was the hooking of the fish; and some have even declared they would not mind breaking every salmon directly after fastening him. Such men, to be consistent, should drop the salmon and stick to the trout: they will of course have more rises, and fix more fish, but the idea is absurd. If they have arrived at such a pinnacle of perfection, why not reduce their tackle to a single horse-

hair? And if even this should be too strong for their exquisite skill, let them carefully cull the softest hair from the softest lock of their own softer heads.

However one may admire the dexterity of a master of the rod, as he casts his line between every opening among the trees, in a difficult river, yet I would rather see him manage his fish after hooking it; the cool nerve and delicate touch is the very perfection of art; and I should never pronounce a man a true salmon-fisher until I had seen him working one in a difficult situation. To throw a very long line, and to search the casts properly with the fly, are no doubt indispensable requisites; but a river fly angler, (for I don't here speak of either bait or loch fishing,) who can work his hooked fish scientifically, will seldom be deficient in all the prerequisites of fixing him; while the *rising* man who has only fished preserved waters, where all is clear and open, should he hook a salmon in a difficult place, will most likely find that he has got hold of too strong a customer. And here we may ask what was the magic in angling that captivated the intellect of such men as Chantrey and Davy? Sir Humphrey, I suspect, would have looked rather queer if an officious friend had told him that all the sport was over when the forty-pound fish he landed above Yair Bridge was first hooked. And the great sculptor would have been equally astonished if the struggles of a sixteen-pound Thames trout had been treated with the like contempt! Whatever may be the reason, all true anglers know that the doubtful contest with a monster-fish forms no inconsiderable part of the enjoyment; and his being laid upon the shelving bank, the crowning point of all. No doubt the philosophy or the poetry of angling was one reason of its being the pastime of so many great minds;

but when even contemplative Wotton had fairly landed a gorgeous fish, I will venture to say that the triumph of success swallowed up every other pleasure.

But, without analyzing their feelings, we know not how much we owe to this recreation of departed genius. Might not the safety lamp have been lit amid the limpid waters of the Tweed, and some of the most beautiful creations of Chantrey's fancy been first conceived on the green banks of Father Thames? Great men, however, can sometimes be great boys at the water-side. I have witnessed, with some amusement, the late Sir Charles Bell's comical vexation, when an unlooked-for rod bore down upon him. His testy frown, when interfered with, was quite irresistible—proof enough of his eagerness in the sport. But perhaps this unbending of the bow may have given it double power when strung again. Sir Charles was only a second-rate fisher, and it often seemed curious to me that he, and several men of the brightest intellect whom I have watched at the river-side, seemed more ignorant of their favourite amusement than of any other thing. I should not have wondered at any want of practical skill, so much as their ignorance of the habits of fish; in which department they seemed scarcely to excel the herd-laddie, who stared at them with vacant gaze.

Every newly arrived salmon-fisher should secure the services of the ablest native practitioner who may proffer them, and will thus be shown all the best casts of the river. It is absurd vanity to suppose oneself capable of discovering them without a great waste of time. No doubt a good salmon angler will at once perceive the places where fish are most likely to harbour, but the misfortune is, that those casts which *appear* the most

certain may sometimes deceive, while there are particular nooks, perhaps the least attractive even to an experienced eye, where a fish is pretty likely to rise; this is especially the case when the river is swollen. An angler must have but a poor knowledge of his craft, who, after once or twice fishing down a stream under proper guidance, could not afterwards manage for himself. It will be very necessary to get a list of the most killing flies in use, on the spot, and tie them of various shades and sizes.

After being thoroughly shown the casts of the river when swollen, it may be as well to have recourse to the guide again, when it becomes small and clear; as some pools that are excellent in flood, are not worth a throw when the water has fallen in, and others that were too foaming and boiling when the river was large, then come into prime order. The resorts of salmon, however, are much more easily detected when the river is low. This state of the water also requires considerable difference in the fly, chiefly in size. In my opinion, most salmon-fishers use too large hooks.

A stranger will often find his guide's knowledge superior to his practice; and that is the reason why the lower orders frequently excel those who might appear to a spectator to throw a better and finer line. Some anglers have an additional piece to screw on to their rods for long casts; a very thin butt is required when this piece is not added, and it is more apt to twist the rod. If equal in other respects, a man who has the power of throwing a very long line has the same advantage over a less gifted friend, in this particular, that a far-killing gun has over an inferior one, both in the same skilful hands. I should, therefore, advise every aspirant to excellence in salmon-

fishing to attain this knack in the greatest possible perfection.

Some anglers who throw the longest line make it swirl out upon the water, the hook appearing to alight last. Others cause the fly to hover for a moment, and touch the water before any part of the line. These last appear the neater fishers, but the others command more water. In fishing a salmon-cast, throw a point down stream, bringing your hook gradually round by short jerks, but always keep it two points against the stream, and never bring it in so straight towards you as in trout-fishing. In dead water, when a very long cast, you may throw straight out, bringing your fly round, by keeping the point of the rod up instead of down stream. There is an under-handed throw much in use on the Spey, which prevents the line from circling behind. Of course this is a great advantage among trees or other obstacles. It is generally practised up stream, and the line with its *swish* upon the water goes over all the fish before they see the fly, which appears to me a great objection. These Spey-fishers can throw this under-handed cast as far as an expert hand in the ordinary way. A peculiar rod is necessary, which must be very stiff. Indeed, a common salmon rod would be apt to break in the hands of these fishers. The cast is easily learned, and must be seen to be thoroughly understood.

Large rivers require a large rather than a gaudy fly, which must decrease in size as the river narrows. Rapid brawling streams, on the contrary, take a gaudy fly rather than a large one. There are many Highland burns where salmon and sea-trout ascend in numbers in the autumn. These being generally shallow and rapid, a large fly would

frighten as many as it would attract. If you fish with a small hook of sober colour in such troubled water, it might not catch their sight. Streams of this kind are in best order when tumbling over stock and stone something the colour of London porter. The reason that a large fly of sombre hue is preferred for a stately river, arises from the depth and clearness of the water. A large fly is required to catch attention of fish at the bottom, while gay colours would be apt to alarm them as they come up, when the water is so clear. When a large river is also rapid, as in the higher parts of the Tay, the fly may be proportionably bright. The size of the stream is an excellent criterion for that of the hook, and you may see every village urchin, fishing for the spring trout in Tweed, with a hook double the size of that he uses in Gala, or any of the other tributaries, for the very same purpose: the favourite fly in both cases being a woodcock-wing, hare's-ear body, tied with blue thread.

The *regular* fishermen, as they call themselves, of any particular river, will hold up the flies they are accustomed to use, and affirm that they will kill in any water. These men have, of course, a great advantage over occasional visitors, both from their knowledge of the flies and places where the fish lie; gentlemen are therefore apt to overrate their pretensions, and pay compliments which they suck down as eagerly as (by their own account) the salmon do their flies. But take both to a strange river and leave them to their unaided resources, and, if equal in other respects, the advantage ought to be on the side of the amateur, because, from the variety of rivers in his fishing tours, he gains twice the insight into the habits of fish; although he may not appear to the same advantage

with a far inferior fisher, when the latter is upon his own regular beat. Nevertheless, I must say that most gentlemen are so careless of everything but throwing the line, that the advantage gained by their more extensive means of observation is more than counterbalanced by the reflection of the lower orders, who put all their head-piece into their practice.

In the deep rocky parts of the river, especially at the beginning of the season, put on your largest fly, trying a smaller should you not get a rise. In the rapid Highland streams, where I have said before a small fly should be used, if you need any alteration, let it be in colour rather than in size. But on this point, as no invariable rule can be given, it will be better to get advice on the spot, if you can obtain it. For instance, though the Thames is so sluggish, and the trout so wary, the most killing fly there is what they call "the soldier-palmer," that is, a bright-dyed hackle red pig's wool, and gold tinsel.

When fishing for salmon only, never have two flies on your cast. The pleasure of hooking more fish will not make up for the vexation of losing one, even should more be secured in the long run. This, however, must be a matter of taste. By changing the fly judiciously, you have nearly as good a chance with one as with two, although sometimes the fish may be a little longer in stirring. Don't be *too* certain that you have detected the most killing fly because fish take it well one day, as salmon, in some moods, will rise at anything you throw over them.

When large rivers are so low that the salmon reject the smallest legitimate fly, reduce your hook to the size of those recommended for the Highland streams, viz., what is called a sea-trout fly, and try before the sun is up,

and after it sets. It is needless to say that this fly must be of a very sober cast. With these reduced flies, and no glaring sunshine on the water, a fish may now and then be taken in the pools, when there would have been no chance with the smallest salmon hook. An excellent fly for some light summer waters is a ptarmigan wing, dull yellow, or dark green body, and a hackle half black and half red. This is first-rate for large sea-trout. In the Echaig, a blue jay-wing is a standing favourite, both with salmon and sea-trout, in every state of the river; and even in full flood they refuse a lighter wing. A dark mottled pheasant tail for wing, red body, and gold tinsel, is also a choice fly for the grilse and salmon of that water.

The salmon almost always keep the channel * or deep parts of a river; so, if it is fordable, you will often have to change from one side to the other, as the heaviest stream alters its course. In small waters this is not difficult, but in great rivers one is frequently obliged to make choice of a side. This requires judgment, as much of the day's sport depends on securing that one which combined circumstances render the most desirable at the time.

Trolling with par is a most deadly method, the bait being so gaudy, but it is ruinous to fly-fishing. If a par has been trailed over a salmon, there is little chance of its rising to the fly for some time, perhaps not even for that day. The Scotch peasantry have invented a substitute

* This rule does not hold good with trout. Often the weather-side of a stream, even when shallow, is the surest find for them, because the flies and other insects, being drifted across, are collected on the opposite bank. In *lochs*, they would be devoured almost as soon as their voyage had begun, therefore the contrary rule obtains.

for the Thames trolling-rod. I had one made by a country joiner, although without joints, which cast even the fly nearly as well as my best salmon-rod; but the point being stiff, it was better adapted for par or minnow. By unwinding the length of line you wish to throw from the reel, and then pulling it through the large rings, until only a few yards hang down with the appended bait, you can jerk it out something after the manner of an English troller, with this difference, that the cast is made over the right or left shoulder. Some prefer a supple top, which entices the fish from its lively spinning, but is more apt to miss them. After all, it is but a sorry shift for the beautiful smooth underhanded casts of the Thames anglers. Even a moderate performer with a London trolling rod, would excel the most skilful Highland par or minnow-fisher. There is also this great advantage on the side of the southern rod, that it injures the bait far less. But indeed the English manner of baiting, and whole arrangement of trolling-tackle, is very far superior to ours. I have fished with Thames trollers who were so particular as to bait differently with a bleak from a gudgeon *. A bleak is best on a dark windy day, from being showy, a gudgeon on a calm bright day, as its dark colour conceals and confounds the hooks. By the same rule a roach is good in our lochs in clear weather. Bleak, however, are thought the best spinning bait on the Thames, unless at

* A bleak, with three rows of three hooks, tied back to back, and a single hook the reverse way, to separate the lowest row from the one above: and one top hook through the lips of the bait. A gudgeon, two rows of three hooks, one of two, and a single hook for the lips. It is of no use to describe the process of baiting, as every man must take a practical lesson from a good troller, before he can make any hand of it.

very rapid mill-dams, where the tougher gudgeon is not so apt to spoil.

Young herring, from their shining scales, are found to be a most enticing bait for salmon. I have often tried them with success, especially in the lochs. Of course they must be used salt. The great objection to using them in the river is, that they are so very tender.

Should the water be confined, and the streams narrow and rapid, every inch may be searched by standing at the pool-head, and letting out line by yard-lengths, shifting the bait alternately from one side to the other until all the reel be nearly expended. Unless the river is flooded, very little lead is required. Pull your line, instead of winding it, slowly back again, searching as before, and when satisfied wind up and proceed to another pool. When the river is broad and you require to throw, you can make very far casts, as the par is tough and not easily spoiled. Swing it gently back as far as you can, and then bring it forward in the same way. I have seen a man with only one arm, a perfect master of this kind of throwing, so much does it depend upon a little knack. Some will say that very rapid spinning is not good. But I have always found both in boat and river trolling, whether with minnow or par, that the more rapid and true the spinning, the greater my chance of stirring the fish. When trolling for salmon or large shy trout, I therefore adopt the mode of the Thames fishermen, on account of the superiority of the spinning, as well as the lesser risk of missing the fish.

When the diminishing water prevents the salmon from rising at the par, you may still succeed with minnow, in the streams, especially about dusk. Very large trout, also, that scarcely ever rise to a fly, dash freely after the

minnow, when the sun is down. They may also take it in the day-time, if the water should be a little swollen and the sky cloudy. But the river salmon-fisher is more indebted to bait than either par or minnow, and for this reason, that salmon will take a worm when the river is so low that they refuse all other kinds of prey. In river-angling a large hook should be used, and a mixture of dew-worms and the small-red, or the brandling if it can be procured. The bait should be massy, nearly as thick as your little finger. This is accomplished by pushing up all the odds and ends of the worms you put on, along the shank of the hook and the gut, more or less, according to the angler's fancy. In rapid running water, a good lump of bait is more easily seen from a distance, and if a fresh worm be put on the point of the hook the imposture cannot well be detected in the moving stream. Lead the line to reach within a yard or so of the bottom, and search every inch of pool and stream, noticing the slightest tug. When you perceive the least straightening of the line, always go over the same inch until you either fix the fish, or disgust him. Never be in a hurry with a large fish, give him time if possible to gorge. A good hold is half the battle with a good salmon, as in a long-continued struggle an indifferent one is apt to wear and give way, often at the few last faint efforts to spurn the shore.

Behind large stones and in eddies there is always a good cast for worm, and in searching the latter you can't be too particular. Try every variety of depth and current; in fact, seem to humour the line, though dexterously guiding it. No greater test of a practical bait-fisher than this.

I always like to have some bait in my pocket, even on

the most propitious day for the fly, and the following successful results of the practice occurred the summer before last. There are four pools at the top of the Echaig, a little separated from the other casts. As the season advances, the large fish are very apt to remain in them. My custom was generally to begin at the lowest of these pools, fish up with fly to the top, and, if unsuccessful, to put on bait, and rake them down again. In the autumn of 1847, I rose a salmon in the bottom pool, at the first throw, gave him a rest, and rose him again. Another ten minutes' rest, while I put on a smaller fly. He rose a third time, but not wishing to disgust him, I passed on to the pool above. A second salmon rose near the tail of the pool. But, although I gave him the customary law, and also changed my flies, he was stubborn. I therefore walked off to the two top pools, but no fish moved in them either at fly or bait. I returned to my first salmon—up he came again, keen as ever. I left him once more for his neighbour in the pool above, but his mood was still unchanged. I therefore put on bait, when he rushed at it like a bull-dog. In about twenty minutes I had him extended on the grey shingle, half on land, half in water, when his hold broke. I rushed down, but had the mortification to see him waddle into the deeps again. With my crest a little lowered, I descended to my quondam friend in the first pool; a fifth time he rose fiercely. I therefore waited the usual time, and he rose again. Upon the seventh trial, however, he refused; so I gave him the same lure which had nearly proved fatal to the other. Instantly he was at it and fast. But a more cross-grained "sea-king" I never contended with. It was about twelve o'clock when I hooked him. At one, he was fresh as a

laverock. About forty yards below, a tree that jutted over a deep part of the river prevented my leading him down stream, so he had every advantage, and I must say seemed inclined to take it. Sometimes he would sulk, and when with great trouble I shook him off the bottom, he would rush up or down the pool, terminating his vagaries by a fair somerset. Half-past two o'clock, and my arm quite tired. I looked often to the road for assistance, but no one appeared. A little before three, I saw a car, and hailed the driver, who good-naturedly left his vehicle, and to my question if he could gaff a fish, replied that "he was na gude with the flee, but gi' him a stroke at the sawmont wi' the clip and he wad na seek anither." I gave him my gaff, and began to strain and shake the salmon, if possible, to bring him within the reach of my self-confident ally. At last I brought him with some difficulty near the fatal weapon. The "stroke" was given, but it was too plain the "sawmont" would require if he did not "*seek* anither!" The man had scraped him, and thus rendered him desperate. Down he rushed, past the tree. It was not of so much consequence now, for I gave my rod to the driver for a moment, (who handled it exactly like his whip,) got round the tree, and was all right. Having the command of the stream, I soon brought the fish under the bank, when the man gaffed him cleverly. Although so game, he was only ten pounds' weight, and had I not been hampered with the tree, I should have managed him in half an hour. I anticipate the remark, "A bad day for the fly is often a good one for the worm." This maxim was not applicable in the present case, for with one of the flies, several times refused by the salmon, I hooked and landed a three-pound

sea-trout, in the next pool I fished. No sooner had I dropped it into my bag, than a five-pound grilse sucked down the same fly, as eagerly as the trout did, and shared the same fate. I had no more time to spare, but, if I could have remained, should probably have had prime sport with the fly, as I left a beautiful reach of the river untried.

About a fortnight after, the river was again in excellent trim for the fly, and I alongside of the pool I considered surest for a heavy fish. After twice going carefully over it with the most approved flies, and not even a break, feeling almost certain that a salmon lodged there, I again had recourse to the worm. At the very foot of the pool, where it joined the shallow, my bait stopped, and the peculiar twitching of the line made good my prognostic. Allowing him time to gorge, I struck, and had hold of a noble fellow. After a good struggle, I landed the largest fish I ever secured in the Echaig, fifteen pounds and a half when I brought him home. This day, however, neither salmon nor sea-trout would look at a fly.

A raw salmon-fisher is seldom aware what sized fish has risen. It often appears much smaller than it actually is, from the fore-shortening caused by the salmon coming straight up, seizing the fly, then descending head foremost; which last motion generally gives a glimpse of its tail. Instead of this, if the fish should flounder its whole body out of water in coming at the fly, the effect is very imposing, and even a six-pounder will appear to the novice a perfect monster.

When hooked fish splash on the top of the water, take great care, or you may break their hold by too tight a strain. The opposite extreme is equally dangerous, as

they may then shake the hook out of their mouth. It is the nicety of art to let them get down without falling into either error. Should the river be small, of course most of the heavy fish will be collected in the deepest pools. Pay most attention to them. When stones and rocks are easily seen at the bottom, there is a clearness either in the air or water that hinders fish from stirring freely; you have then, perhaps, a better chance with worm than anything else. Also, when leaves and other rubbish come floating down, they frighten fish, and prevent their seeing the fly. The nearer the bottom you angle, of course these impediments are less in the way. They are most troublesome on a windy day. When foam is thick upon the water, fish rise badly to a fly. A succession of floods, or, as we call them, "spates," will gorge the fish, and make them shy, especially of taking bait.

I shall here add an instance or two of the fastidiousness of salmon at one time, and their voracity at another; by which it will be evident that there are days when a very bungler may capture them, and others when all our skill is well needed. In summer, when the Teith was rather dwindled, a Highlander rose a grilse with a small sea-trout fly. He, of course, gave him a rest, and tried him with a larger, to no effect; went back to the small one, and again rose him. He then put on, in succession, a worm, a par, and a minnow, without getting a tug; and, as a last resource, cut off the par's tail*, when the fish

* The par tail is an excellent substitute for the minnow, and in some moods of the water is to be preferred. It is easy to bait with, and bears very rough usage on the hooks. The head and shoulders are cut off in a slanting way, and you bait in the same manner as with the minnow or par.

came up greedily and fastened. He would never have wasted so much time had he not known that, from the low state of the river, there was little chance of another rise all day. On the other hand, a shepherd lad was looking dreamily over the Brig of Turk, upon the large deep hole below, overhanging which the martins had formed a colony in the sand-bank, when one of the young martins fell out of the nest into the river, and was immediately gulped down by a large salmon. The shepherd procured a bait-hook, and the coarsest tackle, took another young bird out of the nest, and baited; the fish at once came up again, was hooked, and landed.

Salmon are certainly far scarcer now than formerly, and the average weight of those taken much decreased. Sixteen-pound fish are now as rare as twenty-pounders used to be a few years ago. Many reasons are suggested for this falling off, but the most rational I have heard is the dexterity of the sea-netters close to the mouths of all our good salmon rivers and streams, and latterly the rage for thorough draining, which makes the rise and fall of the rivers both sudden and extreme. In consequence, the winter spawning-beds are often left so shallow as to be chilled and rotted by frost.

The following make-shift is inserted for the benefit of the luckless wight who may have the misfortune to break the top of his rod at the water-side, and neglected to bring a spare one. On the morning of my last day's fishing of the Echaig, I hooked a four-pound sea-trout on my bob, and when the fish was quite spent, the trail-fly fastened on a rotten stump. I waded in to try to disengage it, and in so doing, carelessly strained back my rod over my right

shoulder. The fish gave a languid plunge, and, of course, broke the top. Although I had only some thread, and a pair of scissors, I cut a couple of twigs, and spliced my rod, as clumsily as ever a country surgeon bungled a poor man's leg. With my maimed instrument I killed two fine salmon and several sea-trout. I had fished all the season, and bagged two hundred and fifty-seven sea-trout, many very large, and twelve salmon and grilse, with the same top, and little expected to break it the last day, when I was particularly anxious to do great things. A few years ago, the same mishap befel me when fishing in Loch Dronkie. At the beginning of the day, a large yellow trout rose, and was fixed, just under a perpendicular bank. Not being able to land the fish without throwing back my rod too far, I snapped the top, though I secured my prey. Nothing daunted, I mended my rod with a bit of twine, and killed five more fine trout. I question if, either day, I should have had better sport, had no accident occurred.

"IT 'S A FAR CRY TO LOCH OW."

TROLLING for giant trout is the very acme of rod-fishing. It is generally thought that the whole of this exciting sport consists in fixing good baits upon the trolling-rod, letting out a sufficiency of line, mainly relying upon the boatman's skill to point out the best fishing-ground. Although trolling after this fashion may occasionally be successful, yet the reverse is far oftener experienced, when all the blame is sure to be laid on the weather; as the best ground has been carefully searched, and the baits were excellent. Few gentlemen are aware how easily this best ground may be changed to a good distance on either side, by a bright sun, a breeze of wind, or a rise of the loch after rain. This is invariably the case where the shores are level, and the depth, consequently, gradual. Should the sky be dark and the loch discoloured, or, on the contrary, small and clear, with a cloudless sky, a difference in the size and colour of the bait, and rapidity in spinning it, may bring home an empty boat, or reward us with a couple of trout that will give the boatman as much trouble to carry as two buckets of water.

There are three kinds of trout that peculiarly belong to this description of fishing. And, first, the great salmo-ferox, from its size, strength, and cunning, deserves the highest place. Next, the gillaroo (pronounced "ghirroo"

by the Highlanders), which, although not nearly so shy, nor of such giant proportions as the other, yet has been frequently taken from sixteen to eighteen pounds. (I have never fished much for them myself, and the largest I have caught was five pounds weight. I hooked him with minnow near the foot of Loch Lubnaig, as I rowed home after fly-fishing the green sunk banks at the top. He was in excellent condition; but in fight and appearance strongly reminded me of a barbel.) And, lastly, the famous trout of the Thames. It seldom attains the dimensions even of our gillaroo; but merits place among the first triumvirate, both from its beauty and the skill required to hook it.

In trolling for any of these fish, especially the salmo-ferox, great attention should be paid to the tackle, not only that it is all of the very best quality, but also that it is dressed in a manner least apt to miss the trout. Of course the angler must not expect many runs in a day, which makes it particularly vexatious when the fish that *do* dash at the bait escape the hooks. In boat-trolling for smaller trout, I often use but two hooks—a large one through the tail of the bait, and a smaller through its mouth. This has many advantages; you bait quickly and easily, the appearance of the minnow is not spoiled, and when the trout are at all greedy, they don't often miss. There is this to be said against it, however, that when shy fish bite warily, they may sometimes seize the bait by the middle, and, for want of middle hooks, blow it away again, when slightly pricked by the others. The spinning also is neither so quick nor so true as by the following method, which I have tried with great success. It is, first a single hook, next three tied back to back, then another single one tied the contrary way, ending with a second trio. Of course, when trolling

for the feroxes, all the hooks must be very large. This latter plan, when properly baited, moves very naturally; and, although there are so many hooks, I am convinced, *from the rapidity of the spinning*, they are even less perceptible than when there are few. One of the last hooks being inserted *at the side* of the bait's tail, the whole tail fin catches the water better than by the other more simple method; and there are three hooks for the shoulder and three for the tail, the two places where the feroxes are most apt to strike. I am quite sure, after trying both ways, that this last plan not only misses fewer trout, but secures a greater number of runs. I should therefore strongly recommend it when large shy fish are the object; although *not* where trout are small and plentiful, especially in cold weather, when the difficulty of baiting is a serious objection.

When fairly afloat, beware of trusting too implicitly to your boatman, even should you be totally unacquainted with the loch. It commonly happens, unless he is a good practical fisher, that he will take you over the same ground under all circumstances; and should no fish run, lay the blame on something unpropitious in the day, which it may require some ingenuity on his part to discover, and some credulity on yours to believe. Your best plan with such a guide is to make him be most particular about the surest resorts of the large fish; and should you be unsuccessful the first time of going over them, try again a little nearer the shore, if there is much wind; or, if it be calm, a little further out, *especially when the loch is small.* Towards dusk you may generally keep nearer the shore, also when the loch has risen, or is discoloured with rain. You must not then sink the baits so deep, but raise them by taking

off some of the sinking lead, not by winding up a part of the line, as the shallower you troll, the more need of a long line. It is always a good plan to have baits of different sizes; the larger upon the outside rod, which should have the longest line and heaviest lead. This rod should be fixed by the butt, at the opposite side of the boat, so as to cross before you. I need not say the reel and line must be quite free. Keep the other rod in hand, now and then sinking the point in the water as it grows deeper or the day calmer. Should the rod across the boat hook a fish, instantly throw the other to the boatman next you, who may wind it up out of your way, his comrade guiding the boat with both oars. If the fish is large, he will most likely strike away from the boat, and your first effort should be to shorten your line by backing water. Whenever the fish is under command of a short line, and you can persuade him to follow the boat, land and kill him from shore.

While sitting in the stern, be always on the look out for weeds, and give the alarm. Your boatmen will immediately turn rapidly into the deep; and you, raising a rod in each hand, as high as possible, should make every effort to keep the baits near the surface. If this is done cleverly, it may prevent that major misery of boat-trolling, *a double fast.* If fortunate enough to get clear, it may be as well to examine the baits; indeed, this should be done at intervals throughout the day; as a small green weed attached to the bait will prevent it from spinning, or, at all events, act as a damper to the trout. Fish always for such shy customers with a very long line, especially if there is little wind to curl the water. Where the shores are level, the depth is generally gradual; therefore try the good places at various

depths, as your own judgment may suggest. But should the rock or mountain rise abruptly from the margin, the water almost always deepens suddenly within a short distance of the shore. Once going over is quite enough if you keep between the shallow and the deep, which only occupies a few yards. When sky and water are dull, a large bright bait, such as a salmon smelt, is very good; but, if the loch is clear and low, bait one rod with a par instead of a burn-trout, the ordinary bait.

Never find fault with your boatmen, when the hooks stick fast, for taking you into too shallow water. If you do, they will most likely prevent this annoyance, by keeping too deep for any fish to see your bait. Most fishing guides are too apt, at any rate, to err this way, to save themselves trouble; as they dread a fast even more than the angler. The truth is, when trolling for the salmo-ferox, the baits should be hung only a few yards from the bottom. They must therefore frequently catch a weed, or root, or sunk rock. Be assured that the largest fish are generally taken by trolling close to the bottom, as they are lazy. In roughish weather row slowly, in order to give them a good opportunity of seeing and seizing the bait; quicker in a mild clear day, for it is then as well to give them little time to reflect. East wind is the worst for Loch Awe; west or north-west the most favourable. By adhering to these rules, a fair troller ought to take one or two large feroxes every good day.

In the year 1842 I had five days' trolling on Loch Awe, and, as I noted down each day's success, will here record it.

Head-quarters, Cladich, April 30th. Did not go out till five o'clock; a fine evening, but too calm. Trolled

down three miles on the Cladich side of the loch, returned over the same ground, a little nearer shore; not a tug until dusk, when we were within half a mile of the inn. I then hooked a fish: he was a dull wretch, and made indifferent play. Weight, eight pounds. When brought to table he cut up white, but was firm and good to eat. I have observed two kinds of the salmo-ferox, one, dark-skinned and white in the flesh; the other, pink in flesh, and of starry scales. The latter always makes the most spirited resistance. Perhaps it may be inferred that there is only one kind, and that the difference arises from their condition. This is not the case, however, as I have taken white-fleshed specimens in the finest possible order.

May 2nd. Started at seven for Castle Connal, about midway between Cladich and the ford at the foot of the loch. Castle Connal Bay a great resort for the heavy fish—killed a brace, one six pounds, the other two and a half. Trolled till six o'clock.

May 3rd. A close sultry wind; did not go to fish till after dinner, when it got brisker. Tried the islands and head of the loch; hooked a fine fish off Enish Isle; he made capital play for half an hour, when I stranded him upon the island. Weight, nine and a half pounds, in first-rate condition, and a beautiful fish. Had a look at the island, and a description of it from old Sandy. It is a fine green sheep pasture, and often called the green isle, as well as Enish Isle, or Ellen's Island. Ellen was a daughter of Sir James McNaughton, and was the first person buried in the island. She was drowned in the loch. The poor chief of Lochiel, who was stabbed with the penknife in Castle Connal, was also buried here.

After having satisfied my craving for traditions, true or false, we re-entered the boat, and coasted Fruich-land, or the Heather Island. The castle of Fruich-land is a picturesque ruin. Sir James McNaughton was once governor of it, and, when Ben Cruachan was a deer-forest, Alexander the Third sojourned in the castle to enjoy forest sport. Its shore, however, afforded none to me. We now coasted the mainland, to the head of the loch, where I hooked a small fellow, only one pound and three quarters—came round the opposite side, and entered the estuary of the Awe, a fine black deep creek, but I never hooked a large fish in it. To-day we only got a small thing, rather more than a pound. To make up, Sandy was profuse in story. Pointing to the dark threatening mountain, with the white streak of the winter drift upon its summit, "It was on the side o' Ben Cruachan here, that the Irish chief, McFaydon, was beat by Sir William Wallace, and chased into a cave yonder (showing a crag opposite). Sir William fand him oot, however, an' stuck his head on a spear on the tap o' the craig, by order o' Sir Neil Campbell, Black Knight o' Loch Ow."

I was pondering over the rock, where the Irish chief's knowledge-box had, no doubt, afforded a resting-place for the sage owls of the neighbouring dells, when Sandy again called my attention to a brook, fringed with oak copse, which trickled over the heathery brow of Ben Cruachan. From his solemn air, I expected an improvement on the Black Knight's cruelty to poor McFaydon. "Yon 's an awfu' place for wild cats. I heard them answering 'ither wi' sic screighs, ae nicht whan I passed late, I thoucht I wad hae been frichtened oot o'

ma joodgment." "And what did you do, Sandy?" "I jist falded my arms across ma throat, an' ran past the burn as hard as I could split. Catch me gang past that place again after the gloamin'."

There is something very imposing in this outlet of the Awe. The rocks on each side so rugged and steep. The narrow deep water so dark from their shadow. If you drop a pebble into it, the sound is so vivid and hollow, you shudder at the distance it must sink before finding its bed. I rather think the sudden and great depth of the water is one reason why so few fish frequent this creek. We now emerged from the bay, and coasted the stony cheerful shore of new Inverawe. When skirting this shallow, and gliding slowly past the little isles which lie beyond, Sandy is always in expectation "o' a rug." He was not gratified by one to-day.

May 4th. Up at four o'clock, intending to troll down to the Ford at the foot of the Loch, a distance of nineteen miles. It was a dead calm when we rowed off, but, from certain appearances in the sky the evening before, we were pretty sure of at least as much wind as we wanted before breakfast-time. So it proved. By ten o'clock we had a north-wester which effectually barred our progress farther down than Castle Connal. Put about, and drifted back with the wind, trolling the best bays and shores on each side of the loch. Hooked a very fine trout off a rocky point three miles below Port Sonachan. It was tenderly hooked, and slipped off, to our chagrin. Crossed to the Sonachan side, and hooked another with a salmon-smelt. Landed him, after a tough struggle of three quarters of an hour, on Bala-Menach shore; ten pounds, and in the finest condition. No more runs till we passed Cladich burn, and began to

pull along the inhabited island, I then hooked a fish which soon came to the top of the water, and I saw he was a pike. Sandy assured me it was "ane o' they new beasts that cam' doon the Urchay frae Loch-Tulla, that my Lord Breadalbane pat in." We made small bones of him, as he was only four pounds' weight. Got two more trout, rather above a pound, on our way home.

May 5th. I had now only one more day to spare, and was disappointed at being unable to devote it to the North end of the loch, at "the foord," decidedly the best trolling ground for the large fish. It was a squally showery morning, so I waited to see if the afternoon would clear up. There was no change, but as the wind was westerly I ordered out the boat about four o'clock. Trolled down three miles, when I had "a rug." Landed the trout in a few minutes—only two pounds. Crossed over and searched the Inistrinich shore on our return. Unsuccessful, till we reached a very weedy creek nearly opposite Cladich, which Sandy was anxious to avoid. But to me it looked so tempting that I made him turn in, although he cast many a rueful look at his great enemies, the weeds. About half way down the little bay, a strong lively fish seized the bait; we got clear of the confined water with some difficulty, landed, and played him from shore. Although he only weighed six pounds, I have seldom taken out a more high-mettled trout. The evening was bitterly cold, so we did not bait again, but pulled straight for the harbour of Cladich, and next day drove over the hill to Inverary for a short sojourn there. Caution:—Always weigh the large fish yourself, or see them weighed, when at a fishing inn, otherwise they will probably weigh two pounds heavier down stairs than up.

There are a number of little mountain tarns in the neighbourhood of Inverary, most of them well stocked. A chain of lochans, about eight miles over the hills, are well worth the fly-fisher's attention. I climbed to them, one balmy day, with my fly-trouting rod, and a few casts round my hat. The scenery from the tops of the hills did not much hit my fancy, although the views of Loch Fine and the opposite glens no doubt are pleasing. It was a long dreary walk, with few objects of interest to shorten it, except the instinctive wiles of a moss-cheeper (meadow-pipit) and a sparrow-hawk to decoy me from their respective nests. The pipit really deceived me at first, so completely did it sham a broken leg and wing. As for the little hawk, although I marked the very spot she rose from, all my ingenuity could not discover her young. She flew about, appearing quite unconcerned so long as I kept near this place; but when I walked away, she always pitched down, making a great fuss, as much as to say, "Keep off my nest, here it is." Giving me a false direction as plainly as a bird could speak.

The first lochan of the chain, named Camisdown, lies much lower than the others, and is a good deal the largest. Some of the trout in it are eight or ten pounds' weight. I only got one rise, and secured a fish of about a pound. There are few days in the year that they rise well in this loch, and bait is more acceptable than fly. The other little tarns are upon the tops of the hills. Two of them contain no fish, and look as if they were dead, when contrasted with the others, all alive from the continual rising of trout. In a few hours I filled my kreel, (a pretty large one), and might easily have stocked it again, as the day was good for the fly, and the fish keen.

A fisherman in the neighbourhood gave me a strange account of a moss-hole—for it deserves no more dignified name—which breeds trout of twelve pounds' weight. As the "weedy loch" was only half an hour's walk from Inverary, I took advantage of the first favourable day to give it a trial, both with fly and bait, for one of these monsters. I thought my guide was joking when he pointed to a shallow hole, no bigger than an English duck-pond, and so overgrown with water plants, that there was scarcely three square yards clear. After watching for a little time, a great break of the water, but slow and heavy, in the midst of the weeds, betokened the kind of customers I should have to deal with. The trolling-rod was quickly baited, but there was some difficulty to find opening enough for the hook to sink. After shifting several times, for the great bubbles at top of the water were still seen at distant intervals, I put on the most approved fly for the "weedy loch," viz., a red wing from the landrail's feather, (a partridge tail feather will do as well,) and a green body. It was the strangest fishing I ever attempted, to pitch the fly at every open space, however small, and twitch back again without playing it an inch. Even thus you were almost sure of a weed at each endeavour. I did hook a fish, however, and, thanks to the goodness of my tackle, landed him in spite of them. It was the shortest, thickest, and most silvery yellow trout I ever brought to the bank of loch or river. Weight, two pounds and a half. Angus, my guide, told me that all the very large ones were caught with worm, but a dull, windy, showery day was indispensable, so none would look at mine.

I gave them an hour's rest, and during this interval,

had an account of a Loch Fine herring-fisher's life, from Angus, a frank athletic young man, the skipper and part owner of a boat. The fleet of skows, which are always hauled up, high and dry, to refit after the season is over, were all launching at present, and Angus meant to set sail in ten days. When shooting their nets, they had their choice of the best herrings to eat, for when they sold them "by the dizen *, the warst made up the coont, and fetched the same price as the best." In the creeks and lochs where they anchored, they could always get milk from the shepherds' sheelings and boothies scattered along the banks, which milk from the little Highland cattle, grazed in the sheltered straths and glens, was "as rich as cream every drap o 't." Some of the fishermen, he said, "*indulged in dirt*," which luxury, however, he strictly prohibited in his boat.

It was now time to take to my rod again and go over all the open places with the fly. Another trout actually rose and hooked at the same spot as the former one, but in straining to prevent his entanglement in the weeds his hold broke. The "weedy loch" is a novelty to most anglers, and well worth a visit on that account.

* Various sizes of herring frequent different lochs. They are called "skulls," and the Loch Fine skull is so much larger than the others, that five hundred go to a cran, while seven hundred from Loch Long are required to make it.

ROCK AND RIVER OUSELS.

Although the rock ousel, as his name imports, is fond of rocks and precipices, and commonly builds among them, yet a pair may often be met with haunting ferny brakes with only a few scattered stones, upon which they delight to perch. When disturbed, they fly from stone to stone, uttering a very grating chirp, which seems to be a note of defiance. This summer (1842) a good number of them came down from the hills to the garden at Lennie, and did much damage to the fruit, especially the currants. The gardener shot several, which he brought to me. The ring of the males was very dusky, and in some there were brown feathers interspersed. The females had no white ring at all. They were shy birds, much more so than the thrushes and blackbirds, their fellow-depredators, and it required some caution to get a shot at them.

A nest was found in the spring, near the foot of a thick bush, on the bank of a rocky brook. They reared their young ones undisturbed. I think it not unlikely that the greater number of those that frequented the garden in summer, were birds of that year, although the crescent of one shot by the gardener, evidently an old male, was far less pure than in spring, and certainly not so fully pronounced. A pair had their nest on the crags of Arthur's Seat, the summer before last, and I often watched them

with interest. The crescent in both, particularly the male, was silvery as the moon's, and the birds were not wild. Their song is pleasing, though melancholy. This bird has always been a great favourite with me, most likely from association, for it loves "the unplanted places."

The little Dipper, or river ousel is no less attractive. There is a look of loneliness about this little inhabitant of the flood like the solitudes it frequents. Often, in the deepest and most tangled recess of the mountain burn, or perched upon some gaunt stone by the side of the muir-land loch, the water ousel, when disturbed by some chance explorer of nature, will fly cheerily forward, and, settling again upon the clear water, seems, by the buoyancy of its little movements, to try to impart its happiness to the thoughtful visitant.

The food of this little bird consists of water insects, the roe of fish, &c., but its bill does not seem formed for seizing the small fry, as the kingfisher does. It is also incapable of feeding at any great depth, from the want of web feet, on which account it generally chooses the shallows where the salmon and trout roe is deposited. I have twice seen it feed upon some very minute substance about a foot from the surface, but whether animalculæ or not, it was impossible to ascertain. The first time, when after wild ducks on the river Tay, I saw a motion in a clear, still creek, and when I cautiously peeped over the bank, I discovered the little bird under water, rowing itself both with wings and legs, at the same time pecking at something, apparently with as much ease as a barn-door fowl would devour a handful of grain. It was so intent on its repast, that I was not perceived for a few seconds, but on peeping up to see if the coast was clear, it saw

me at once through the water, rose to the surface, and flew away as with one and the same motion. Another winter, my notice was attracted by just such a ripple in a quiet stream, and again I detected the ousel at his secret meal. The water in both cases was very bright, but without a microscope it could not be discovered whether the delicacies on which it regaled were vegetable substances or some minute water insects.

In spring and summer these birds generally are found singly or in pairs, but in winter they often congregate in some favoured river, and may then be seen in great numbers. They do not always select the places where fish are most abundant, as we should imagine from their living so much on the roe. I stumbled upon a newly-flown nest of these birds, when fishing the brook that separates Loch Katrine from Achray, and could easily have caught some of them, but I rather amused myself by watching their unformed bows and curtseys, copied, no doubt, from the parents, who were flitting up and down in great alarm.

The water ousel is a hardy bird, especially for one that does not migrate in summer; and it is a novelty when land and water are bound by an iron frost, and

> "seized from shore to shore,
> The whole imprisoned river growls below,"

to hear this little bird, perched upon the frozen mass, strike up its cheerful song. Not another note is then to be heard, which gives it the more imposing effect,—like the nightingale at midnight, making dreariness more dreary by contrast. The pipe of this river minstrel is not unlike the first attempts of the thrush in early spring, when a cold wind a little checks its power.

A friend of mine had the good hap to shoot a white ousel on the banks of the Clyde. I narrowly inspected it, and could not detect a single dark feather. Legs, beak, and all had exactly the same cream-coloured shade. In all creatures that put on their white winter dress, there is a dark spot, left as hostage for their again appearing in summer hue. But Albinos have always the same unvarying sickly white.

I have several times been fairly cheated by the water ousel, and had a fruitless stalk for ducks through its means. Seated at a distance, upon a small stone, it is often difficult, even with one's glass, not to mistake it for the head, and the stone for the body of a duck. If the ousel does not fly, his motions appear exactly like the duck raising its head. His restless disposition, however, seldom allows him to remain long enough on the stone to keep up the deception, and, generally, before commencing operations, you see the duck's head fly off. I have noticed this bird with a large worm in its beak, which it had picked out of the banks of a mossy brook, high among the hills, its summer residence. During the severity of winter, it always prefers larger streams, its favourite food being the spawn of fish, and minute water insects.

LENNIE BURN.

How many recollections does the name of Lennie Burn arouse! None that have ever trod those pleasant paths, or threaded the devious track of that enchanting glen, will wonder that memory lingers there with fond delight. The ivied rocks, the fragrant woodbine, and countless varieties of wild flowers, combined with the rare exotics which the hand of art had scattered there,—above all, the symphony of the brook gurgling within its rocky bed, and ending with a fall, which, if not so wild as Bracklinn, surpasses it both in height and beauty. Many a sultry summer day have I wandered among these shady walks, listening to the sleepy burn, or watching the little trout suck down an occasional insect from among the myriads flickering about the surface. "The pool," a sort of reservoir, and head quarters of the burn-trout, always particularly engaged my attention. I soon learned to distinguish every inmate, not only from its size and hue, but also its temper and disposition. Some were shy; others, greedy and tyrannical; and these several qualities were often exhibited so plainly, that we might learn a lesson even from a fish.

There was a small pond, formed by an old course of the burn, which, from time to time, was another source of speculation and amusement. It had a constant supply

of fresh water from a spring, and although the inhabitants of this little bason were completely imprisoned, yet they were in no want of sustenance, from the bottom being soft and muddy, covered with leaves and decomposed vegetable matter. The place was surrounded by trees, which rained down abundance of flies, caterpillars, &c., for two or three trout, which, no one knows how, had found their way in.

During the latter end of autumn, and the whole of winter, no sign of life is to be seen in this retired standing pool; but about the middle of February, if the weather is mild and the sun warm, a slight shaking noise lets me know that the frogs have awaked from their winter sleep. By peeping cautiously over the bank, screening myself behind the trees, I discover one or two heads above the surface, which, sometimes singly, and then in chorus, emit the tremulous croak which had excited my attention. Should the weather still continue warm, every day adds to the number of heads, and the spawn rapidly accumulates in a shallow corner of the well. The croaking is now so loud as to be heard at some distance, not merely from the increase of voices, but that each note acquires double force, the more warm and genial the day. When the cold returns, as in our springs it is so apt to do, many of the frogs seek their winter shelter, and the croak of those that remain dwindles into a faint treble, instead of their full diapason. A touch of frost will cause all the frogs to disappear, and make the top of the spawn as white as an oyster. But the first warm sun and mild air brings them to the surface again, and restores the spawn to its original colour. It is then most curious to observe their gambols, jumping and tumbling about like boys at *leap-frog;* and

no doubt the origin of this favourite game of the playground. After a time the frogs all leave the pool, and little black eggs are formed in the spawn, which gradually increase in size until little tadpoles emerge.

But now a more interesting visitor may sometimes be seen. The first burst of spring has brought into life the earlier insects, and with them the subtle active trout. In this little pond I have counted three; two of them very small, the other about six inches long. My attention was first directed to them one fine July evening, when I saw what appeared to be fish rising. I crept forward, and soon perceived the larger trout amidst a crowd of summer insects, some buzzing about the surface, and others settling upon it. He was sucking them down lazily and at intervals, like a finished gourmand at a satisfactory dinner. But here the resemblance ends, for, upon my stepping forward, he darted to the other side of the tank, with a celerity very unlike the respected gentleman aforesaid when leaving his ample board. In my evening walks I seldom omitted to take a peep at the little pond, and soon discovered that my spotted friend was not solitary; and one or other of them was almost always to be seen during the season.

Spring came round again, and I resolved to watch the first appearance of these trout. Accordingly, as soon as I noticed fish rising in the streams, I went to the pond several times a day. It was not, however, till the beginning of April that I perceived the largest trout, looking very heavy and dull, but making no attempt to feed. I watched it for a quarter of an hour, when, contrary to its usual custom of darting among the bushes at the opposite side for a hiding place, it sunk down among the leaves

and mud, head foremost, like an eel. The manner of its passing the winter was now evident, and as the evening was chilly, it had again sought the warmth of its muddy quarters.

A third inmate of this little pool excited my curiosity and interest more than either of the others. During the warm summer nights several large eels were constantly disporting among the soft mud, particularly after rain. Each had its corner of the pond, and they seldom invaded the other's territories. They were five in number; two rather larger than the others, one of them a yellowish green, the other a dark brown; indeed they were all of different hues, and the shade of their colour was my first distinguishing mark. This leads me to suppose that fish do not *always* take their colour from that of the water, or from the quality of the bottom. I know it is often the case, especially with trout, and I have seen fish caught on a mossy soil, nearly black, while those taken on a clear golden sand were bright yellow, though in the same loch.

But to return to my friends, the eels. It was nothing uncommon to see several of them peeping out of a separate retreat in their own premises. The head of one perhaps from behind a decayed leaf, the whole body of another laid alongside a piece of stick, which it so nearly resembled as to be scarcely distinguishable. Indeed it required some practice to perceive them at all, and I have been nearly a minute before discovering one, though several were in sight. Having some curiosity to find out whether any more eels would get into this place should the original occupants be taken away, I, by means of a hook and strong gut-line, at different times pulled out the

whole five. They took the bait readily, but it was rather difficult to hook them, as they held it for some time across their mouth without swallowing, after the manner of pike. I observed that these eels were more shy than those I had taken in lochs and rivers, but in excellent condition. They were never replaced, however, during the time that I had opportunity of watching. The trout remained unmolested, and seemed also to thrive.

During sultry weather, the eels often rested the lower part of their bodies on the mud, and raised their noses to the top of the water; when in this position they had a very serpent-like appearance, and might have been easily mistaken for snakes. I never saw this done by eels before, but, if noticed in the like attitude by a Loch-Lomond sage, it might, perhaps, account for one of the three wonders ascribed to that water, viz.: Fish without fins, waves without wind, and a floating island.

THE PEAT ISLAND.

A SQUARE flat island on Loch Lomond, called Inch Moan, but familiarly known as the Peat Island, (from the people of Luss having liberty to cast peats there,) is a favourite resort of every kind of wild fowl. At a little distance, it appears almost level with the water, on which account, as well as from its mossy formation, it abounds in swamps and morasses. This may partly account for the partiality of the wild fowl to its shores. But there are stronger reasons still; the retired, wild character of the place, seldom visited by man, except for an occasional boat-load of peats, added to which, the shallowness of the water at the edges, growing deep so very gradually, is most favourable to their feeding. In the season, the further end of the island, having a grassy margin and bottom, is much frequented by flocks of wild ducks and wigeon, on many occasions I have put up not less than a thousand in one company. In the severest weather, the sea eagle continually resorts there to prey upon the wild fowl, and so voracious is it at this time, that my father's gamekeeper had his water dog nearly drowned by one of them when retrieving a wild duck. He managed, however, to shoot the erne, the talons of which were long preserved as a trophy. I have seldom done much execution there with my gun, from the difficulty of approaching

such a multitude of eyes over a dead level, where there is not a bush or tree to serve as a screen.

When the Hoopers come to the loch they are generally first observed at this part of Inch Moan, but to get a shot is next to impossible, as they can sound the bottom at the distance of several hundred yards from the land, and seldom feed nearer. They are also excellent watchmen for the fowl resting on the banks, and it is astonishing to see the quickness with which the latter notice the slightest sign of alarm shown by their white sentinels. But, although I have had many disappointments from the aforesaid causes, yet by watching them at a distance with my glass, I have taken many a lesson in the habits of the birds, and got useful hints for future operations.

A short distance from the shore, perhaps, may be seen a flock of tufted ducks, diving at longer or shorter intervals, according to the depth of the water; seldom appearing at the top without their mouthful of grass, which is cunningly watched by a stray mallard or two, ready to pounce upon the prize the moment it is seen. The mallard, however, but rarely succeeds in his piracy, as the divers generally manage to gulp down their mouthful. At last, tired of the bootless chase, the plunderers join their comrades at the margin, contenting themselves with what may drift there from the feeding-ground of the divers.

In very severe weather, especially during a snow-storm, both ducks and wigeon are apt to trust to the diving tribe as their purveyors. It would be difficult for any one who has not witnessed it, to imagine the supply left by a flock of dun-birds on a lee shore. I have seen as much as a cart-load drifted on not more than fifty yards of coast.

The wild duck sometimes feeds by diving, but this is

only in spring, after pairing. The dives are very short, and it is probable that at this time they are feeding on some water-insect which they could not find at the margin. In winter they never feed farther from shore than they can sound the bottom, by sinking their heads and turning up their tails, like the domestic duck. An artificial supply of food will sometimes cause moss ducks to collect in small flocks on running streams. The river Gala flows sluggishly just below the town of Galashiels, bringing down the refuse from the houses. And here I never missed seeing ducks in hard weather. They stuck to the place most pertinaciously, although I repeatedly fired at them from behind a wall, and killed several. I solved the mystery one morning by finding half a potato, neatly peeled and cut for the saucepan, in the bill of a mallard I had just shot. So I perceived that this spot was a kind of nucleus round which a quantity of the rubbish had collected.

But I have flown far away from my island, where, in summer as in winter, there is always some rare and shy sojourner. At the end of some long point, immersed to the feathers in the clear water, stands the patient, lonely heron, waiting till the shoal of incautious fish, which the warm sun has brought to the shallows, begin curiously to nibble at its silvery legs. When, striking down its harpoon bill, with far greater certainty than a leister thrown by the most skilful hand, it rarely or never fails to draw up its victim. Not far distant, and perched upon an archipelago of rocks, may be seen the snowy-breasted herring gull, while its mate is floating upon the glassy deep. At the sound of a footstep, they both extend their sluggish wings, and soar high into the air with loud and discordant

scream, a pretty sure sign that the nest is near. This call, not altogether unlike the barking of a dog, may be heard for miles around, and is to be considered a note of alarm rather than of defiance.

Herons and gulls build every year on this island, or near to it. We have often tamed the young of both, and it would be difficult to say which are the most voracious. I have given half a dozen perch at a time, which have been instantly swallowed, dorsal fins and all, by one of these young gluttons. As soon as their wings grew, they wandered away, and would not suffer themselves to be secured until they were half-famished. The gulls would often be driven back by extreme hunger to the place where they were usually fed: the herons, even in this state, had always to be carried home, tempted by a fish or piece of raw flesh which was held out to them. After getting hold of one by the above stratagem, I was amazed to see it throw up a dead mole, which showed the straits to which it had been reduced. Another, which I winged about the end of November at the foot of a drain, cast up three or four good-sized trout. How it had caught them at that season, I should like to know.

The young gulls are very fond of slugs, &c., and two kept in my father's kitchen garden were of great use in destroying such reptiles. They require more solid food, however, but these dainties appear to come in as a dessert. The nests of the herons are always on a tree or ruin. Those of the gulls on a dry sandy piece of ground on the island. The red-breasted merganser, and the goosander, may be seen in the summer, but are constant visitors in winter. The latter sometimes scattered along the shore in flocks of fifty and upwards.

But the most interesting summer emigrant is the curlew. There is a melody in its two wild notes, that carries an indescribable charm over the calm waters or the lonely moor. It generally makes its appearance a little after the green plover, and both hatch on the island every year. By imitating the curlew's cry, I have often arrested its flight, even at an immense distance, and brought it wheeling round my head for some minutes together. In early spring it is generally most clamorous, and continues so until it leaves the inland moors and lochs for the sea coast, with its young brood. The chicks run very soon, but are so difficult to find, that upon some of our Lowland moors I have counted at least a dozen pairs of old birds, yet have not stumbled on a single young one. As I was returning one day from fishing, my old dog found and pointed a couple, which I transferred to my kreel, and had dressed for the table. They were nearly full grown, but could not fly a yard. The young curlews are great annoyances to the game-keeper, from the facility with which they elude even the best-trained pointers. The dog is continually touching upon their scent, which distracts his attention from game, but he scarcely ever "*winds*" one, to make amends for this waste of time. Before the 12th of August, however, all the curlews have left.

Many years ago, an eccentric man was tempted to raise a house on the Peat Island. He put up four substantial walls, but stopped payment at the roof, and this edifice, so far as it goes, still stands, a monument of his folly. It has often, however, been useful to us as an observatory for wild fowl.

The sheep-pasture of this island is peculiarly rich, and

always in great request among the farmers. It is seldom, however, that its quiet is disturbed by the presence either of a shepherd or his dog. Should any traveller chance to read this description, and look down upon my lowly island from one of its commanding neighbours, no doubt he would wonder at my selection. There is, indeed, no waving copse, no rocky height, with its varied view, to entrance the summer visitor, but it has to me even a greater charm in its wild and lonely seclusion.

For the last few winters, the wild sport on Loch Lomond has much deteriorated from what I recollect it in former years. The frosts have never been so long continued, nor so severe, as to tame the fowl, and bring wild swans or geese. Besides, the soft rainy weather of the west has prevailed so much, rendering the loch large and full, that the few water-fowl that do frequent it at such unfavourable times, have all kept to the shallow water on the eastern side. But should a frost set in, the shallow parts of course are first frozen, the loch falls rapidly, and they come pouring over to our side. Every day brings fresh numbers, both from the shallow coast opposite, and the moor lochans, now frozen up. In January, 1848, there were only ten days of frost, and the preceding year about the same amount of continued hard weather. I spent the best days of both seasons on the loch, and will endeavour to show what the admirer of wild shooting may expect upon such expeditions.

There are three excellent ranges for wild fowl, all beginning at Rossdhu House. One, down to the old water of Fruin, called the Mid-Ross Shore, is a great resort of wigeon and ducks. It extends along a flat, grassy lonely coast, with fine screens of whin and broom Another

takes in the whole shore as far as Luss. It is full of weedy bays, and green points, and is much frequented by dun-birds, tufts, scaups, and morillons. The third range comprehends the islands, viz.: Inch Moan, which I have just described, Inch Tavannach, and Inch Connachan. The narrow passage between these islands, called the Straits, is a fine shelter for all wild-fowl from the Hooper to the Teal. And, lastly, the Castle of Galbraith, a very small island, which, although it has no feeding ground, makes a good resting place for ducks at mid-day. When they are detected there in fancied security with their beaks under their wings, and one leg tucked up comfortably into their breast feathers, it is the most certain opportunity for a sitting shot. There is also a fine view of Inch Moan, and part of the Straits, from the top of the ruin, once the yearly resort of the Osprey, and which I never ascend without regret for having murdered her on her own threshold. From the top of this ruinous castle, the best haunts of the wild fowl on the adjoining islands may be commanded with a telescope. Tradition says that a sort of wild man, called Galbraith, sheltered in the old castle, and being a most expert swimmer, as he had much need to be, he used to strike out for Rossdhu House, take the roast off the spit, tie it round his body with a string, and return in triumph to his island. When a boy I was much horrified at this account, and used to picture a sort of half-demon, half-maniac rushing into the house, the inmates flying right and left, while he marched to the water with his smoking booty.

I will now recount the adventures of eight days' duck-stalking, beginning Friday, January 21st, 1848. Frosty, but not very hard. Took the Luss beat, the loch not

being low enough for Mid-Ross shores, attended by game-keeper, with a little wiry hairy retriever that looked as if he could stand as much cold as a Polar bear. No fowl of any kind on Luss shores, so embarked for the islands. Detected the whole mass of tufts, dun-birds, morillons, &c., diving and feeding together, on the Inch Tavannach side of the straits. Saw it would be a most difficult stalk, and, from the nature of the ground, that I could only get a flying right and left. So it turned out; a long circuit brought me within a distant run, could get no nearer, so chose a pair of tufts, as being closest to shore. Watched their simultaneous dive. Made my run, and dropped both. Took boat for Inch Moan, as the straits were now cleared of fowl for this day. Only three moss ducks on a green point of the south side. A long stalk, and distant chance. Dropped a pair; one, however, rose again, and made off. Came round to north coast of the island. Nothing but a dab-chick, which I shot for a specimen. In the far distance, to the west, keeper spied what we thought a morillon diving, but when I advanced I saw it was a male tuft. Dropped him dead; a long shot. No more fowl seen to day; total, five head.

Saturday, 27th. Embarked at ten o'clock, and steered straight for the Castle of Galbraith, as the fowl were not pinched enough to frequent Luss shores. Ascended the castle, and had the satisfaction of twigging a shoal of dun-birds busily feeding on the north shore of Inch Moan. Immediately set sail, and landed on the south side, under cover of the roofless house. Perused the flock through my glass, and was a little let down to see three ducks on the shore close under the dun-birds. The chance of a heavy shot at the latter materially lessened by the ducks.

Waited to see if they would decamp, but they were hungry, and would not quit the weeds drifting in from their diving friends. Leaving gamekeeper in the house, I took a crouching stretch along the south shore, and, as the ground was dry and hard, did not grudge a long hand and knee crawl across the island. Neared the north shore without disturbing their operations, and, when within fifty yards of them, got my eye upon the mar-plot ducks, about thirty yards from me. Could easily have strung them all. The dun-birds were feeding in circles of from twenty to thirty yards in circumference. They were now at the furthest point, and I, of course, waited till they came to the nearest, which brought the mass to within forty yards. Fired into the middle of them. Six lay dead at my first discharge, and two from wing at my second. Three swam away, two only wing-broken, but the third badly struck in the body also. The keeper prudently did not slip the retriever, but instantly ran for the boat: he, too, had marked the mortally wounded bird; so, after securing the eight fowl, we followed in pursuit, and drove him ashore into a bush on Inch Tavannach. I put my hand into my pocket for my powder-flask, to load, in case he might dash out into the water again. No flask was there! I had left it on my dressing-table, when charging my gun, before coming out in the morning. Nothing now for it but to slip the retriever. Before he could reach the bush, however, the wary bird rushed out again upon its native element. Down under water, but the dive was a short one. Dive after dive—shorter and shorter. At last it could not get out of sight, and I soon picked up the ninth dun-bird to two discharges. When it is borne in mind that my charge did not exceed an ounce and three-

quarters of No. 4 shot, and that the dun-bird is nearly as large as a duck, and decidedly the most hardy bird to carry away shot of all the *anas* tribe, any expert wild-fowl shooter will at once perceive how rare a piece of good fortune a shot of this kind is. It was, therefore, without much grumbling that I rowed to Rossdhu for my powder-flask, a distance of about two miles. When we returned to Inch Moan, the day had worn on. I got a flying right and left at wigeon, on the far end of the island, killing both.

It was now late, so we sought the mainland, and I emptied my gun at a fine roebuck passing close to me in the dusk. My No. 4 told well, and he fell dead without a struggle. Eleven head, and a roe.

Monday, 24th. Mist so thick that stalking was out of the question. Calm. Frost hard, and ground dry. Only one chance at a mud mallard, and slew him on Inch Moan. One head.

Tuesday, 25th. Close and misty, as yesterday. Frost continued. Only two chances, (they certainly might be called so, for the mist made it all chance together,) one at wigeon, which I stalked by sound of their purring and whistling on Mid-Ross shore. Killed three at a shot. When returning, stumbled on a mallard, and dropped him dead. This evening a brisk wind set in. Four head.

Wednesday, 26th. Clear frost, with a little wind. Took the Mid-Ross beat. About a mile before we got to the good ducking ground, a heron rose out of a swamp in an oak copse. Fired, and dropped her among the trees. A good omen! As soon as we ascended Auchintulloch Brae, which commands a long reach of Mid-Ross, saw three ducks and a drake feeding in the nearest bay. A very easy stalk.

Wounded two ducks sitting with my first barrel, and had not my second slipped off by accident, would have killed the mallard in all likelihood. Dick, the retriever, secured one of the wounded, the other made away. The next chance was a flying right and left out of the old watercourse of the Fruin. Killed a duck, and mortally wounded a drake. Both long shots. Marked down the drake, which separated from the flock. With my glass, I perceived a fine phalanx of wigeon, closely wedged on Fruin Point. A bare and difficult approach over the long promontory, and very few bushes to hide me. Could not get nearer than sixty-five yards. Had to fire lying flat on the ground. Only one lay.

Rested for an hour, to give the fowl time to come in shore for the evening feed, and then returned over the same ground. Keeper discovered, with his telescope, a mallard, near where the wounded one pitched. Had no doubt it must be him. A very difficult approach. When I neared him, found he had a couple of ducks with him, so was sure it could not be my victim. In attempting to get a fair sitting shot, they saw me, as the ground was bare, and flew up at sixty yards. I did justice upon the polygamous chief by killing one of his ducks. Did not obtain another chance till near the end of the beat, when I saw a couple of wigeon feeding in a weedy creek, and killed both at one shot. Six head and a heron.

Thursday, 27th. Clear hard frost. This morning a fine fleet of dun-birds sailed into Rossdhu Bay, the first that had appeared there since the winter began. The keeper and I were soon on the qui vive. They were diving within a near shot, on the opposite side of the bay. When I succeeded in getting within fifty yards, a piece of white

ice gave way under my foot. They did not see me, so only ceased feeding, and paddled out into the bay. I knew they would soon return, so kept my post. Unfortunately, they neared the shore further down the bay; and, as I saw they would not move from the plentiful table that had attracted them, I dodged back, and came round above. Fired right and left; a longish shot. Four lay, one only wing-broken. Dick retrieved the trio, but I only got a glimpse of the other close to the beach.

We now started for Mid-Ross. Spied a trip of five wigeon from Auchintulloch Brae; they were greedily feeding a few yards from shore, close to a fine screen of whin. Waited long for three in a line, as they were scattered. At length I succeeded in getting them placed fair. Only the centre bird lay; the swelling waves saved the others. By aid of telescope, saw a fine batch of teal on old Fruin Point again. Precisely the same stalk as yesterday; the teal were, however, nearer than the wigeon. Killed four, and did not see any wounded. Gave the customary hour's law of rest, and then returned. Keeper perceived a duck and drake in the first bay after crossing Fruin Water, on our way home. A good shelter within forty yards of them, which I easily reached. Killed the mallard sitting on the beach and the duck flying out upon the loch. Only one more trip of wigeon on the shore; a very long shot from the nearest ambush. Fired right and left, sitting and flying, without bringing down a bird. Ten head.

Friday, 28th. A heavy snow-storm all day. Did not leave the house.

Saturday, 29th. Keen wind and hard frost. Snow a

foot deep. A famous day for water fowl. Thought the weather sufficiently severe to bring the fowl to Altochly, Camstraddan, and Luss shores, so determined to try them before the islands. Saw three wigeon feeding on the green surface food in Rossarden Bay. As they were out of shot did not wait, intending to give them a benefit on my return. A couple of moss ducks were grubbing in Altochly Bay, two yards from the land. With difficulty, obtained a long right and left. The first I fired at sitting, the other flying. The No. 4 flew all about the sitting bird, but she did not seem hit; the other fell dead, to Dick's delight. Proceeding a little further, we were encouraged by a distant view of the dun-birds busily at work in Camstraddan Bay. A long, intricate, and dangerous crawl, from the birds being very scattered, brought me within a run. Sorry to see that they were diving upon a bank at an uncertain distance. Selected the nearest two, and made my rush. Fired the moment they topped the water; both fell, one dead, the other fluttered away into the waves, and was soon lost sight of. Keeper, meantime, had got his eye upon a solitary morillon, a short way off, which was under water when I fired. The ice prevented his getting so near the shore as he evidently wished. Easily stalked him, and made the first dead miss since the commencement of my sport. Meant to shoot him on the wing, but he would not fly until I was in the act of taking a poking sitting aim; spread his wings at the critical moment of pulling the trigger, and, in fact, flew away from the leaden shower before it reached him. Did not waste my second barrel upon so worthless game, but had a good laugh at his escape. When we returned to Rossarden,

two of the wigeon had fed pretty close to the shore, the other remained in the deep. Stalked the pair from Rossarden Wood, and strung them both at a shot.

Embarked for Inch Moan. When about a mile off, saw two small flocks of moss ducks, one on the north and the other on the south side of the island. Of necessity, we must put up one flock by stalking the other. Made choice of the southerns. When I neared them on hand and knee, they were so dispersed that I could only pick off a bird with each barrel. Wounded both badly, but one flew out into the rough water before it dropped. Dick retrieved the other with difficulty.

A crowd of wigeon were collected in the north-east bay of the island. Made a long and careful approach. Got within a fair shot, and dropped four to my two discharges; secured three. Dick had the fourth under his paws, but it managed to escape. It was now almost too dark to spy our game; we, however, twigged a couple of morillons in Inch Connachan Bay. Got to the nearest point without difficulty. Both popped up their heads at the same moment; I killed one, but the other flew into the dark shadow of the island. Nine head.

As will be seen from the above sketch, the rough weather drove the wild fowl into the shelter of the bays to-day; also the waves prevented the wounded from being either seen or retrieved.

Monday, 31st. Delightful weather for wild sport; keen frost and calm. The same range as yesterday. Only a solitary duck on Rossarden to-day. Poor thing, she was taking advantage of the few slant rays of sunshine for a siesta! A massy rock, which towered about forty yards from her resting-place, was easily gained. She was stand-

ing on one leg, with her bill under her wing, the very picture of repose, which I don't think I broke, as she never moved after she fell off her green cushion into the water. Saw the dun-birds, but they were also at rest midway between the islands and the shore. Settled to pay them a visit at dusk, when we were sure they must be at supper in Camstraddan Bay. In the meantime to search the islands. Saw some little black lumps on Galbraith, and, with my telescope, made out a small flock of ducks. It always inspirits us to see them on this island, as, with good management, a fair shot can generally be obtained. We pulled silently past, until we got the castle between us and our quarry, and then, by slow and noiseless strokes, reached the strand. The brushwood was so thick that, although I had only about twenty yards to creep, it took me near half an hour before I was placed fair for my shot. They were quite dispersed and asleep; so, as my second barrel was useless, from the thicket in which I was inclosed, I picked out a fine mallard, and the rest escaped scot-free. No fowl on Inch Moan to-day. Spied a flock of dun-birds, however, in Inch Connachan Bay. Got to the nearest ambush on the shore, but they were diving on a sand-bank in the middle of the bay. Lingered an hour in vain, as they would not leave their feeding-ground. Was obliged, at last, to content myself with a morillon, which opportunely fed round between them and me, just when my patience was exhausted. To make up, keeper, in the meantime, had a noble chance in the straits, all ready for me. Wigeon, tufts and golden eyes were all within easy distance from the snow-covered rocks. With great caution, I neared the white rampart, placed my white cap on my head, and peeped cautiously over. It was some time ere

I made my selection, but at last I got several tufts, golden eyes, and morillons together. Killed two fine male tufts, and winged a morillon with my first discharge; knocking over a golden eye flying with my second. The winged bird, however, escaped. We now set off at racing speed for the dun-birds in Camstraddan Bay. In taking a passing glance at Galbraith, was surprised to see something like ducks. Took out my telescope, thinking it most unlikely that fowl would be resting there again, especially so late. To be sure, it was a couple of ducks asleep! We, therefore, determined to sacrifice the dun-birds to the ducks. A bird on the isle worth two in the bay. Got to them in the same way as before, for they were nearly in the same spot. Had to change my position several times before I could get both in line; this is always dangerous. At last I detected a small opening in the bushes, which gave me the command of them. Fired, and both lay. Rushed down to secure them, but the mallard rose again, so I gave him his quietus with my second barrel. The duck was dead. Eight head.

This ended my wild-fowl shooting for 1848; in all, fifty-four head, a heron, and a roe. The gamekeeper gave me able assistance, and is the only one I ever was out with who understands that sport. In January, 1847, I bagged forty-eight head in the same number of days. It is curious that the frost lasted about the same time both years, and, by the merest chance, the thaw began, in both seasons, the very day I had fixed to leave the loch, when the frost was at the hardest. Neither swans nor geese showed themselves either year; but, had the storm been more severe, we should, no doubt, have had some fine chances at them.

Inch Tavannach and Inch Connachan were teeming with

roe; we seldom passed their shores, especially in the evening, without seeing sometimes seven or eight together.

Ducks and wigeon generally keep the lee-shores; this, however, need not disconcert the stalker, if he only does not let them hear him. I have constantly observed that they *wind* you best in calm weather. In high wind never fear their *noses*, even should it blow direct from you to them. My brother has a gunning-punt upon Loch Lomond, and it was well ascertained, and constantly affirmed, by the boatmen, that the approach with the wind was far "shurer" than when working against it. They always, therefore, tried to advance upon fowl with a *favouring gale*. From the smallness of the flocks, in comparison with those on the sea-coast, and also from the places where they sheltered being often inaccessible to the punt, it has always been considered a failure on our loch.

On *looking down* upon divers with your head on a level with the ground, take care that you do not fancy them within range of your duck-gun from the nearest point on the shore, when they are a long way beyond it. I have several times, under these circumstances, selected my pair, made my run down the bank to the beach, and found that the distance had much foreshortened by my constrained view from above. When I got to the level ground, they were quite out of shot.

A wild-fowl gun for Highland lochs should not be very weighty, as a ponderous weapon is so uncomfortable to stalk with. It should be light enough to take smart rights and lefts. The largest charge of mine is one ounce and three-quarters of shot, and I can pull down snipe and woodcocks with it quite readily.

OWLS.

Owls are generally regarded by the common people with a sort of superstitious awe; and, indeed, there is that in their nature and habits which is apt to call forth feelings of pleasure or aversion, according to the temper and circumstances of the observer. For my own part, I have always looked upon them with peculiar favour, whether watching them flitting past in the twilight, with silky, spectre-like flight, or reverently listening, after nightfall, to their melancholy, oft-repeated cry. Even the harsh screech of the white owl is not without its charm; it appears to belong to the stillness of the night.

There are four species of owls which are emphatically British. For although the Snowy Owl has been occasionally seen and shot in the Shetland Isles, and the Great Eagle Owl is sometimes met with in the mountainous districts of the North of England, yet they are so rare as scarcely to deserve the name of British birds. At all events, I know nothing of them except from report, and make it my rule never to run the risk of misleading by borrowed information. The Little Owl, I have been told, occasionally builds near Oxford, but this Lilliputian is quite as scarce as his Brobdignac kin. By our British owls, then, I mean the Tawny or Ivy Owl, the White or Barn Owl, the Long-eared and Short-eared Owls.

Ever since the old tower of my ancestors has been in ruins, a pair of tawny owls have made their habitation there. When a boy, I never failed to search out their nest, and sometimes tamed one of the young, which was pretty sure to be decoyed away by the parents as soon as it was able to fly. I often saw both father and mother come to their young one in the dusk, sometimes with food in their talons. These young owls were not at all particular what they eat, and devoured greedily raw meat of any kind, as well as fish; but I never saw them drink, and when offered water, they showed as much dislike to it as a cat. All day the young owl sat moping, with closed eyes, hissing and snapping his bill if disturbed; but, about nightfall, his visage became full and staring, and so quick was his sight, that I have only been made aware, by the animation of his solemn face, that the indistinct shadow, barely perceptible, was one of the old ones.

A pair of white owls were equally constant to a small cave among the precipitous rocks of Inch Tavannach, the most picturesque of the thirty-three islands on Loch Lomond. I have often climbed to this nest—by no means an easy task—to watch the growth of the young. There were sometimes four or five, whereas the brown owl had seldom more than two or three. Every fine evening the industrious white owl was to be seen, skirting, with noiseless wing, the lawns and fields about Rossdhu, though nearly a mile from its island. I have often admired its expertness. Whenever it saw or heard a mouse, it settled in the air, like the osprey, and then, with its legs hanging down, ready to seize the moment it came to the ground, appeared rapidly to alight on its prey. The ways of the brown owl are different. It does not appear to hunt on

the wing, but, perched on the top of the highest tree, hears the slightest rustling among the grass, and instantly descends upon its prey. The grotesquely large head of this bird, which also implies large eyes and ears, are no doubt wise provisions to enable it to see and hear acutely in the darkness from such a height. An instance of the very quick ear of the buzzard once came under my own notice, and is probably still more remarkable in the owl. This buzzard, scarcely-full fledged, was standing, erect as a drill-sergeant, in the midst of a noisy group, all distracting his attention, when a field-mouse was let out of a trap among the grass behind him. He listened, wheeled to the right about, instantly detected the little fugitive, and fastened his claw in its back.

I have been a good deal puzzled by the observations of an ingenious naturalist, which certainly are in direct opposition to my own. This gentleman resolved to see whether some young white owls, in his barn, could remain without food during the long summer day. He watched them for about twelve hours, and avers that in that time the old birds fed them a hundred and fifty times. For my own part, I never *saw* the white owl hunting in the day-time, and I know a case in point regarding the tawny owl of quite contrary evidence. A pair had reared their young in a magpie's nest, near the top of a thick pine tree. I used often to go to look at the young, and thus drove the old ones from their dwelling. They were instantly pursued by a host of small birds, principally thrushes and blackbirds; and so surely did this happen, that the noise of their chattering was always a signal to me that the owls' nest was disturbed: whereas, if these owls had hunted for prey in

the daylight to anything like the extent above mentioned, the uproar among the little birds would have been almost incessant. A gamekeeper told me that once, when he climbed the tree, one of the old owls darted down upon his head, and scratched him with its claws. I could scarcely give credit to this, as I always saw both birds on the watch when I invaded their castle, but they never attempted any defence.

When the hen bird was sitting upon her eggs, the male did not take up his quarters so near, for I have frequently seen him, in the dusk, fly across the bay from the opposite oak wood, and settle upon an aged plane tree, uttering a low tremulous hoot. This was immediately answered by a sharp scream from his mate, who then left her nest and joined him on the tree.

Owls hoot all the year, except in the dead of winter, and even then, should the weather be calm and clear, they continue to mourn through the darkness of the night. During the severe winter of 1831, a fine old fellow, the very Tamburini of owls, haunted a clump of beeches; and, from one of the bare gnarled branches, I seldom missed hearing his fine tenor voice when I returned late from shooting. It struck me that he would make a first-rate specimen for my collection. As I passed one night with my duck-gun, I heard him in all his glory, so, creeping under the clump, I at last ascertained from which tree the sound proceeded, but to catch sight of the owl seemed impossible. Although he continued his cry at proper intervals, I strained my eyes for ten minutes, until I perceived, upon the very topmost branch, a little knob. I was slowly raising my gun, on the chance of this being my object, when it glided off,

plainly showing that I was far more visible to him than he to me. He immediately settled upon another tree, and began to hoot. I was, however, more successful this time, for, upon getting under the tree, I detected him, perched as before, near the top. Taking very deliberate aim, I fired, and the poor owl fell half-way down the tree, but, being only wounded, he managed to seize a twig with his claws. I threw a few stones to dislodge him, but as he was not hit in the wings, he flew a little way and dropped. The night was so dark that I could not find him, but next morning I went to the spot, and hearing a great clamour of jays and other birds, I guessed what was the matter, and soon detected my victim lying, persecuted and insulted, at the foot of his tree. He was, of course, at that season, in the finest feather; his back red brown, like an autumn leaf. I have shot some both early and late in the season, whose plumage was quite brown, without any tawny tint. These, I rather think, are the young males and females, but not a distinct species.

If there is no ruin near, these owls will rear their young in a thick ivy tree, or take possession of a magpie's nest, provided it is in some dark old fir-tree or cedar. They never construct one for themselves, but lay their eggs in a hole of the wall in ruins or outbuildings, only scraping a little sand or lime upon the stones. I have twice known the tawny owl hatch in the nest of a magpie, but never in any other bird's. The reason probably is that the nests of crows, rooks, hawks, &c., are all roofless. Once or twice in summer, I have heard the tawny owl hoot in the day-time, but they never continue to do so above two or three times. It has then a most unnatural

sound, and is, of course, not nearly so audible or imposing as during the stillness of night. I recollect once, when standing under a tree where an owl was hooting, being struck with the difference of the note from its sound at a distance. Far off, one wonders that so small a bird can emit such a volume of sound. The nearer you come, however, the less the sound appears; but what it loses in strength it gains in clearness and melody, which I suppose is the reason we hear it at such a distance. I have noticed this also in the sounds of other night birds, especially the nightingale's song, and the chur of the fern-owl, or night-jar *. This last interesting compound of the swallow, the cuckoo, and the owl, is one of our latest spring arrivals. Its food consists of the larger night insects; therefore, unless perched upon a rotten stump, engaged in its sleepy song, it is mostly on wing in pursuit of its prey. Wayward and capricious its movements certainly appear to the solitary dreamer in the gloaming, who sometimes wonders what the bird can mean by its eccentric wheels—not considering that it has to follow the fickle multitude of moths and beetles.

If the winter nights are fine, and no moon, ivy owls may often be heard in full chorus at the grey of morning, which is sometimes continued till break of day. They take their station upon a few chosen perches, hooting some time upon each, and return night after night to the same places, whether a favourite tree, ruin, or outbuild-

* The landrail, in the summer nights, is an exception to this rule. The nearer you approach, the more harsh and grating is the vibration of his crake. Not so the cuckoo, as any one will find who has the hap to be under the tree where he is calling, in the dusk of a still summer eve.

ing of any kind. Three years ago, I had a pair of tame tawny owls, that lived in a tool-house in the garden. They hooted every fine spring and winter night. One was so tame that it always flew against my legs when I brought its food at nightfall. Sometimes it was so dark that I could not see it, but only heard a plaintive wail, and then felt a rush at my feet. If I was later than usual it perched on the balcony, uttering its weak cry. When I placed a bit of meat upon the table, it flew into the room, seized the meat, and flitting into the darkness again, was no more seen that night. Both of these owls were very fond of earth-worms, and devoured great numbers at a time. If given too much liver they hid the overplus under a bush, or in a box border, but never covered it up like a fox or dog. Both came every evening at dusk to drink at their water dish, which operation was performed after the manner of hens. I have seen them continue sipping at intervals for ten minutes at a time. After a fall of snow in early spring, I watched both rolling upon it, occasionally taking a small peck, which perhaps served instead of water. I rather think the tool-house, from being closely shut up, with only two small holes for air, was too hot for birds of such warm plumage—hence their thirst. These owls were not of the same brood; one (the male) was a bright tawny, the other sober brown. After remaining eight months at large, these most interesting pets took their departure about the time of nidification. Their hooting was occasionally heard some distance off, but they never returned to their former abode.

I have now supplied their place by another pair of white or barn owls. They are, however, kept close pri-

soners by a wire door, which admits plenty of air into the tool-house. The habits of these owls are less nocturnal than those of the ivy ones. They frequently feed in the day-time, but I have never seen them drink, although supplied with water. They *do* hoot, but very rarely. I heard one six times in succession, and then it ceased. Their music is a little different from the brown owls. It is only one prolonged cadence, lower and not so mournful as the first hoot of the tawny fellow. They never utter the second juggling whoop of that owl, at least that I have heard. In fact, the habits of the white owl are to be so constantly on wing, beating hedgerows and fields for mice, that he seldom allows himself time for any nocturnal melody, except what he can utter during his silky flight. This is a most harsh scream, and has rightly dubbed him the screech owl. My tame ones very often give a sort of complaining squeak like a very young pig. This is repeated sometimes for hours. It may be that they are dissatisfied at not being allowed the free use of their wings. In the day-time they sometimes snore as loud as a plethoric gentleman of the olden time. Some naturalists say that this snoring is the complaint of the young in the nest for food. How comes it, then, that my two old ones, which have as much food as they can consume, are guilty of these nursery manners?

I have before noticed that the white owl comes out earlier than the brown; and may frequently be seen hunting for prey whenever the sun's glare is a little mellowed by the first shade of evening. Their eyes, not being so large as the ivy owl's, may collect fewer rays in the darkness, but this is made up by a clearer vision in light. They are evidently more expert mousers than the

brown, which may in part account for the latter's destructiveness among young game. I recollect nearly all the young pigeons in my father's dove-cot being harried by a pair of brown owls. It was some months before the robbers were discovered.

The wings of the ivy owl are not so long in proportion to its body and tail as those of the white; neither is its flight so buoyant, although equally soft and spectre like. It is thus less formed for beating a large extent of country for mice, and must often content itself with promiscuous feeding. Mice, on the contrary, seem to be almost the exclusive food of the barn owl; and he is a lucky farmer whose barn is tenanted by them. Some aver that the young will die unless they have a constant supply of mice. I have two living proofs against this assertion, which were brought up principally upon raw meat.

A tame white owl supersedes the necessity of a cat. My little boy had one a few years ago kept in the kitchen. Its dexterity in catching mice was the wonder of all who saw it. Once, when a mouse had been troublesome in the night, he darkened the window next morning, and brought up his owl. In a very short time there was a crash, a faint squeak, and the mouse was never heard again. It used sometimes to startle strangers, by coming down upon their shoulders, with the noiseless spirit-like flight which enabled it to surprise the mice;—when they looked round they encountered a sage face peering inquisitively into theirs. The top of the wings of white owls are beautifully pencilled, and make the best artificial white moths.

The habits of the long-eared owl are pretty much like those of the white, only it is oftener met with in wild unfrequented places, and is also more apt to perch and

rest for awhile, when seeking prey. I have shot them in mistake for woodcocks, flying between me and the sky after nightfall. They skim copses and hedgerows exactly like the white owl, but do not come out so early. I have sometimes put them up in open daylight, out of the heather, where there were neither trees nor rocks. But they are more often flushed from some thick fir-tree, which seems a favourite retreat, especially if surrounded by heath or brushwood. A very fine specimen of this bird was brought me one summer. It had been entangled in a net placed over some seeds, to protect them from the small birds. The mice were also feeding on these seeds, and *they* of course attracted the owl. It was a beautiful little creature, with its bright eyes of yellowish red, and small face animated by fear. The cry of this owl is neither so loud nor harsh as that of the white.

I have never seen the short-eared owl in search of food, which leads me to suppose it watches prey like the tawny. I have several times started it in the day-time, during autumn and winter, from tangled heathery dells where there are fir or yew-trees. Pennant says they arrive in this country in October. My brother-in-law shot one on the Arroquhar Moors shortly after the twelfth of August. It rose out of the heather, and, I believe, was pointed by one of his dogs. I had this bird stuffed. I once pursued another from tree to tree, on Inch Connachan, about the beginning of September. It appeared more shy than any of the other owls, and would not let me come within a hundred yards. Mice seemed to have been its attraction to the island, for I remember that after it had been planted to some extent, so much injury was done by the mice, that a boat-load of cats were im-

ported on purpose to destroy them! There are a few fine old Scotch firs on the island, and out of one of these flew the owl, always winging his way straight to another when I followed him up.

I never heard of the short-eared owl's nest being found in the West Highlands, so conclude it must be a bird of passage there.

The long-eared owl generally rears its young in the Castle Rock of Edinburgh, although they are regularly harried by the bird-fanciers. The barn owl also hatches every year in Craig-Millar Castle, about a mile from the city. The male takes up his quarters during the day in a niche of the old dining-hall. When the curious stranger enters, he turns a sleepy face, and then quietly takes himself off by the hole where a window was. My tame ones always show the same dislike of intrusion during their nap. If I move my head from side to side at their wire door, they at once imitate me most absurdly, and continue to make a pendulum of their heads so long as I set them the example.

WILD PIGEONS,

THERE are four kinds of dove found in a wild state in this country, the largest of which is the ring-dove or cushat, common all over the kingdom. This bird, called also the wood-pigeon, is thought to migrate by many, but, if so, multitudes stay behind. Perhaps one reason for the supposition may be, that numbers congregate in the autumn and beginning of winter, under beech trees, to feed upon the mast, and when this is all devoured they separate in search of other food. The first signal for the flocking of wood-pigeons is the yellowing of the grain—they then choose the ripest part of the field, if possible near the centre, as being least accessible, and generally keep to the same place. When the acorns and beech nuts fall, they greedily feed upon them, and I have sometimes taken about a dozen large acorns out of the crop of one bird. The flock are certain to return morning and evening to feed under any clump of old beeches in the neighbourhood of their haunts. First one alights, cautiously looking all round—then another, and so on, until they drop down half a dozen at a time. There are often two hundred in one flock.

By building a wigwam constructed of twigs, and not disturbing the doves afterwards for a week, they will become quite fearless, and feed close to it: my anxiety

to shoot a pure white one which made its appearance among the rest suggested this plan to me. Many people saw this rarity and fancied it a tame pigeon. I, however, examined it with my telescope, and plainly saw that it was a white ring-dove. Its size and shape of tail clearly showed this, but the most certain mark was a *blue* ring instead of the white one. Notwithstanding my efforts I could not succeed in killing this bird, and only got one random shot, about eighty yards off.

The sleeping place of this flock was a small belt of tall trees, half a mile from their feeding ground. I constantly saw the white dove perched near the top of one of the highest trees, (another undeniable proof of its wood origin,) and manœuvred to obtain a shot, but was completely baffled by the wary bird. Should, however, the night resting-place of ring-doves be known, a few may easily be killed by keeping one side of the plantation and sending some one to make a little noise on the other. They will continue flying overhead, quite within distance, until the reports of your gun have driven them all from their retreat. Many a one have I bagged in this way, as I generally gave the pigeon woods a trial when returning home in the evening. A bad shot may have good sport by waiting for them at dusk under these roosting trees. The only caution necessary is, not to move your gun until the birds have assured themselves that the coast is clear and no enemy lurking near. As they drop in singly, each dove peers round in all directions before settling; whereas, at feed, the first few that alight act as spies to the bevy, the rest heedlessly following. If one should chance to fly up, the whole instantly take wing with a noise like distant thunder.

When frost and snow set in, the last resource of the ring-dove is the turnip-field. Even in deep snow the turnip-tops are not beyond reach, and are generally its staple food in winter. I rather think these doves never devour the turnip itself, although wild geese do, and even ducks, when pinched with hunger. In a country where there are few turnip-fields, ring-doves are seldom seen in large flocks after the beech-mast is consumed. But in the lowland counties, they continue to resort to them in multitudes until they pair in spring. I could never see any diminution in their numbers, nor signs of migration. When they begin to feed on the turnip-tops, their flesh is bitter and ill-flavoured, but the beech-mast and acorns improve it much.

Early in February, should the weather be fine and sunny, the ring-dove begins to coo. At first there are only a few low notes in the morning and evening, but very soon this soothing sound is to be heard with greater power from every corner of the coppice. The doves may also be seen rising in the air to a considerable height, and then allowing themselves to fall with outstretched wings, repeating this motion several times, as if in exquisite enjoyment of the genial season. The coo of the ring-dove continues in a less degree during the summer, but chiefly in the morning and evening. They build very early—the nests being generally about halfway up the evergreen trees, and composed of a few twigs so loosely put together that you may see through them. Many have two broods in the year, but I should imagine not all, at least if we may judge from the decrease of those that coo and soar in summer and autumn. Numbers of branchers scarcely able to fly are to be met with

in August and September. I have also found their nests with young in June, but most likely these were birds that have had their spring hatching destroyed. The nest of this bird is easily discovered, and most people who have lived in the neighbourhood of hanging woods are familiar with its sudden rush through the branches when startled from its eggs.

Five years ago I had some fancy pigeons of various kinds, croppers, tumblers, fan-tails, and carriers. It was a pleasure to feed them every morning after breakfast. One day a ring-dove most unexpectedly appeared and claimed a share of the barley. At first he was rather shy, but in a week or so became the boldest of the company. For two months, "the stranger," as he was still called, was never once absent at morning feed. He always flew over the wall into the garden where the dovecot was placed. Sometimes, after filling his crop, he lingered with the other pigeons nearly the whole day, but never stayed over night. I had the curiosity to watch him in the twilight, in order to find out his sleeping quarters. After several "doubles," he at last roosted on an old apple pollard in a neighbouring garden, returning every night to the same branch of the same tree. At last he became tame enough to pick grain out of my hand. As he was evidently a bird of the year, I rather think he must have been taken from the nest, and kept in a cage, but, having made his escape, hunger may have forced him to beg a meal. Poor fellow! His departure was as sudden and mysterious as his advent. We missed him one morning, and he was never seen again.

The next in size to the ring-dove is the wild pigeon,

or stock-dove. Considerable mistakes seem to have arisen about this bird, some fancying it altogether migratory, and others confounding it with the rock-dove, and tracing it as the origin of the domestic pigeon. The habits of the stock-dove are very different from those of the latter. They are always in summer met with in pairs, perching upon old trees, and building their nests in the decayed hollows. I found two myself in the grounds of Park-place in Berkshire, where a few stock-doves flock and roost with the ring-doves every winter. I had several times seen one of the pairs before the hatching time. They were very wild, and flew more rapidly than ring-doves. About a month after, I stumbled upon the nest in the fork of an aged tree. It was only about ten feet from the ground; and I might have shot the female at any time flying off—the other nest was near the top of an ivy-girt birch. These birds, as well as most of the pigeon tribe, lay two eggs, generally a male and female. Hence the Scotch phrase, when there are only a son and daughter of a family, "a doos nest."

The stock-dove is gregarious in winter, like the ring-dove, and feeds on beech-mast, &c., in the same way. They are not found further north than the midland counties of England. They are beautifully shaped, a blueish grey colour, the males having a fine golden neck. Unlike the other wild pigeons, their voice is a *failure*, being only a sort of grumbling sound.

The rock-dove (the *true* wild pigeon) is smaller than the preceding, and has a white spot above the tail. I have often met with them among the rocky caverns of the coast. They fly with great rapidity, which may account for the name "blue rocks," applied by the admirers of that cruel

sport, pigeon-shooting, to their fleetest birds. Both in the Caithness and Morayshire cliffs, I noticed some brown and light-coloured; these, most likely, had joined their wild associates from some pigeon-house, although there were none within the distance of several miles. This is the more likely, as the habits of the rock-doves are exactly those of the domestic species. Their nests are never fixed in trees, and, when tame pigeons leave the dovecot, they always hatch in similar places; viz., old ruins, and sheltered rocks and cliffs. In fact, I have little doubt they are the same bird in a wild and tame state.

One word for the turtle, that fairest of doves, and most welcome harbinger of spring. There is a plaintive murmur in its coo, connected as it is with the idea of constancy and truth, that has made it, in all ages, *par excellence*, the bird of love and song. One peculiarity of this gentle creature is its concealing itself among the most impervious places of the wood, so that it is not easily seen. It generally builds near the top of thick evergreen trees, and, as it does not come to this country till the end of April, and returns in September, it only rears one brood, taking its journey as soon as the young ones are able to travel.

On first arriving here, they often frequent the green corn-fields in pairs; after they begin to build, however, they keep more to the woods, where nothing but the coo betrays their retreat. In some parts of England, I am told, they are gregarious after they have hatched their young, and frequent the corn and pea-fields like other doves. But I have never seen above four or five in company. I once traced out one by its coo, and had the satisfaction of seeing him perched on the topmost branch of an

old oak, lowering his head at intervals, and pouring forth his tender notes. When partridge-shooting in Suffolk, a pair of turtles rose off the stubble, and settled upon one of the top branches of a high tree. I continued my range in their direction, and killed both at a shot. Neither had the patch on the side of the neck, so were most likely hatched that year.

Turtles are often met with in the northern counties of England, and are not unfrequently found in Scotland. My brother shot one in Dumbartonshire a few years ago. It was evidently very young.

THE HILL POACHER.

An English poacher is generally to be found among the very dregs of the people. A hardened, unscrupulous blackguard, who would shoot the gamekeeper with greater pleasure than he would a pheasant, who fears nothing but detection, and whose conscience would never sting him till on his death-bed. Scotch poachers are a different class of men. To be thieves, drunkards, and, if need be, murderers, is not a *necessary* part of their calling. And, although they are in general not the most reputable part of society, yet many, especially in the Highlands, stand pretty fair with their neighbours. The cause of this difference is easily traced. In England the ground is far more easily preserved, and the keepers much better trained. Therefore, no man need attempt the destruction of game unless he is prepared to run all risks of a deadly skirmish with the watchers. Indeed, there would be few poachers in England were it not for the great abundance of, what may be termed, *tame game*. But the temptations to netting, snaring, ginning pheasants at perch, or smoking them by means of brimstone, are so great, that the poachers traffic with the game-shops to an enormous extent.

To be a good shot, or understand anything of sporting, is not at all necessary to the English poacher; his method of securing game being a good deal like robbing a hen-

roost or rabbit-warren. These men generally poach in company, the numbers being regulated by the party of watchers they expect on the out-look. The gang, often half-drunk, sally forth from some low beer-shop whenever the night is clear and starry. If there are many hares or rabbits in the preserve, they take some mute curs to drive them about, after having set the snares. The fowling-piece, though always carried, in case of an encounter, is seldom used upon game; except, perhaps, with a quarter of a charge, to knock down pheasants at roost, within pistol-shot. This makes little noise, but, of course, they prefer making none. It is well known, when they do resort to this method, that, by beginning at the lowest bough, they may nearly clear the tree. But, should they stupidly shoot the top bird first, the others are very apt to fly off when it comes rustling past them. They have various other methods of quietly destroying game, some of which are practised even in broad daylight. It is seldom, however, that love of sport can be urged in their defence, as these depredations are exactly akin to gipsy thefts, and have little of the excitement caused by love of hunting, so natural to man. It is easy to see that none but desperate characters would engage in such a life. By constantly herding and drinking together, they corrupt each other more; and, by living in continual apprehension, and determining to brave the worst, they learn to set human life, especially that of a gamekeeper, at no value.

Scotch poachers may be divided into Highland and Lowland. The latter class more nearly approximate to their brethren in England, especially those in the neighbourhood of large towns; that is, poach in company, have no pleasure in the sport, and care only for the profit. The

deer on the islands of Loch Lomond were sometimes poached by printers from the Leven works, who, coming in boats, took their booty away with them to sell to the Glasgow poulterers. The foresters had not unfrequently to fire on the boats to keep them off. On one occasion, a party effected a landing upon the Duke of Montrose's deer island, and, having slain one and wounded another, were surprised by the forester and his friends. They all, except one, managed to get back to their boat, leaving the deer behind. When the unfortunate printer saw his friends row off, he managed to hide himself, and could not be discovered. The forester took measures to prevent his escape by immediately securing his own boat, and shotting his rifles. A perfect hurricane of wind most opportunely set in for several days, and prevented the gang, without imminent risk of life, from returning at night. During the day, the forester took his station on a point that commanded a view of the whole island, and, when a boat's crew appeared, rushed down to meet them. The printers often attempted to land, but, as soon as they approached the shore, he fired ball at them, and manfully kept them at bay for three days. On the fourth morning, the half-starved wretch came to the lodge, and delivered himself up.

In remote situations, however, the Lowland poacher often engages in the pursuit of game with the same zest as a gentleman, piques himself upon the excellence of some half-bred cur of a dog, and astonishes his acquaintance by bouncing anecdotes of his wonderful gun. In such out-of-the-way places an amateur like this has often considerable opportunity for indulging his love of sport. Scotch gamekeepers (unlike gardeners) are not to be compared to

those of England. A great proportion of them have been poachers themselves, and turning them into gamekeepers is not a sovereign specific against their old propensities. Many know literally nothing of their business but how to shoot in a bungling manner; and, provided the master is not much of a sportsman himself, and sees game now and then upon his table, he makes few inquiries about the dogs, vermin, poachers, &c. The consequence is, that the single game-*killer*, not *keeper*, troubles himself as little about these *unimportant* particulars, and goes lounging about with his badge of dignity (*i. e.* his gun), summer and winter, occasionally bringing home some game, while the sly poacher, and slyer vermin, are welcome to the overplus for anything he cares! The poacher, therefore, not only has the free run of the shooting-ground by night, but makes it his business to find out when the gamekeeper is despatched upon an errand, and takes a snug rap at the partridges or pheasants by day. At night, he sets snares for hares, and I am sorry to say that the English method of doing this in the middle of the fields has come into general use. He also shoots the pheasants at roost during moonlight, and, if the single Argus of the night should happen to be sound asleep close to the scene of carnage, he makes as much despatch as possible, covering the birds where killed with grass or leaves, and marking the place. He then runs to his cottage, the door of which has been left open, in case of pursuit, and quietly picks up his game at any good opportunity. An old hand, when showing me the casts on the Clyde, said that he had one night killed a dozen pheasants from the public road, over the Duke of ——'s park-wall, marking the wall with a piece of chalk where each bird fell, and secured every one next day by

jumping the wall, and depositing them in a sack, which he called *potatoes*.

When such is the common system of game-preserving in Scotland, no wonder that the great proportion of our Lowland shooting is not very first-rate, and that the poachers do not much trouble themselves with the English methods of netting the fields, &c., which would not be profitable. They are often men who have a regular trade to trust to, and only engage in poaching as a recreation and "sma' help."

But the most sporting poacher is the Highlander*. His chief objects are grouse, black game, and deer; and, as he dare not show his face on the moors while they are crowded with sportsmen, at the beginning of the season, he generally waits till the gentlemen "hae had their wull o' t." The birds are then wild and strong, and can only be killed by means of traps or the gun. Comparatively few are taken by the trap, so the poacher trusts to his skill in eluding the watchers, if there are any, and sallies forth with his dog and gun, in full enjoyment of the sport. Many of these poachers are good shots, and some even can boast a fairish dog. But, generally speaking, their dog is none of the best, often only a colly or terrier, taught to make an apology for a point; the dog's deficiencies, however, are amply made up for by his master's knowledge of the habits of the birds, of the places

* Before the gangs of smugglers were broken up, the Highland poacher was a much more desperate character. All these smugglers were poachers, and as regardless scoundrels as could be met with. Now, however, in place of little patches of barley on all the Highland crofts, good oats are substituted, and not a twinkling fire, on the darkest night, is to be seen on the islands of our lochs. We may thank the excise laws.

where they are likely to be found, as well as to pitch after their flight. Indeed, I should have no hesitation in backing one of these fellows to procure more *fair* shots with his single mongrel, than many of our sporting gentlemen with the best couple of pointers or setters he may possess. But they seldom shoot in *good style*, except at deer, and the best of them, though thought paragons in the neighbourhood, and boasting that, "gie them a bottle o' whiskey in their pocket, they will walk and shoot against ony man in the kingdom," are as inferior to good shots among gentlemen, as they are superior in every other requisite for grouse-shooting. The reason of this is plain enough. The poacher refuses "crank" uncertain shots, hence he seldom excels in them; and, as the birds are always wild and difficult of access when his operations begin, all his ingenuity is exerted to get within easy distance, and, no matter whether sitting or flying, to bag *as many birds with as few shots as possible.*

Many a capital shot, who has left the moors for the low grounds, under the idea that grouse are unapproachable, would be thoroughly astonished if he put himself under the implicit guidance of one of these men. Indeed, most sportsmen, however expert with the fowling-piece, and however much they may pique themselves upon their skill in all the details of the sport, scarcely know its first principles, as they leave the moors just when the thorough bass is to be begun.

The tricks of the Highland poacher are manifold and ingenious. He can always form a shrewd guess to what distance the report of his gun may be heard at any dreaded point, and, if possible, contrives to get a hillock between, in order to intercept it. Indeed, I have known them

shoot for days *before the moors opened*, and, by such management, as well as taking advantage of the wind, not a report was heard by the watchers. But, should they be discovered, they seldom offer other resistance than leg bail, which is very often taken, as the poacher's wind and knowledge of the country is, generally, at least equal to that of his pursuer.

A knowing hill-poacher may in this way destroy far more game than the gentleman who has preceded him over the same ground, although enjoying every advantage of dogs, season, and opportunity, and, unless opposed by skilful and determined watchers, may escape detection for years. But when the head-keeper is an active, honest, and clear-headed man, above all, *if he is well supported by his master*, it is rarely that the poacher can pursue his trade long. The first thing the keeper does, upon taking charge of a large Highland estate, is to make himself acquainted with the names, persons, and places of abode of all the noted poachers within reach; for, although he may often be troubled with others from a distance, yet those on the spot do the chief mischief. He then selects his watchers with great care; if possible, *men from a distance*, and well known to himself. These watchers are all provided with a telescope and pistol. They are expected, in a very short time, to know the gait and manner of every poacher within their own bounds. They soon become wonderfully expert, with the help of their glass, and, even when they have never had the opportunity of seeing the poacher face to face, will distinguish him with certainty by his mode of walking. Should any of the watchers turn out lazy, faint-hearted, or stupid, his place is immediately supplied by another.

As soon as the head-keeper has drilled his recruits into a perfect knowledge of their duty, he commences operations in good earnest. He always has a spy to watch the house of the poacher he means to entrap, and thus knows all his movements*. Should he detect him on the ground, he takes care to have one of the best-winded assistants to intercept at this point, before giving chase. This is even more necessary, when looking after a night poacher. The watchers are as knowing as the poacher in regard to wind, always keeping to leeward of their beat, and taking advantage of all the hills that give them a far look-out, where the report of a gun would be most apt to reach them.

With the advantage of a thoroughly trained head-keeper, and the expense only of the day's wages of a few watchers, most Highland properties might be comparatively safe from poachers, who would very soon cease to molest them. These men, if resolutely seized, will seldom make determined resistance, for although many of them, from motives of policy, think it necessary to talk big, in order to deter farmers and shepherds from coming near them, yet I have known many of those gallant talkers the first to show the white feather. One great black fellow, of six feet two, who in-

* A common, but somewhat stale trick of the Highland poachers, is to conceal the barrel of their gun down the leg of their trowsers, carrying the stock either in the inside coat-pocket, or wrapping it in a plaid. The watchers at once detect a man thus hampered, and always look upon him with suspicion if he has his plaid round him. Many of them, therefore, leave their gun at the nearest boothy to the ground. This avails them little, as the watchers know well enough that when the poacher leaves his house at a suspicious time, or bends his steps in a suspicious direction, the instrument of death will turn up, as if by magic.

fested my father's moors before they were strictly preserved, endeavoured, very unsuccessfully, to spread the terror of his name, for he was several times found out to be the most arrant craven. But, indeed, the race of Highland poachers, be their pluck ever so good, have no wish to engage in more serious offences, and, as long as the generality of our moors are in the neglected state they are at present, have ample opportunity of making a profitable thing of it without much risk. Whenever a gentleman sets about protecting in good earnest, they for the most part leave his estate for that of his more careless neighbour.

As to snaring, which is oftener practised either at night or during divine service, every expert keeper, by looking the runs both in the fields and fences, will easily know whether snares have been placed in them. He then comes quietly at the time when he thinks they will be set, puts a rabbit or hare into one of them, and places a watch. Many people fancy this method of taking game the most difficult of detection, but, with efficient keepers, the snarer is, perhaps, the most easily secured of all poachers.

A curious snaring story was told me by a gamekeeper in Morayshire. He and his son perceived evident marks of snares for rabbits on the open sand-downs, but all their ingenuity could not detect the culprit. He watched at night, and all proper times, but there was no appearance of any one coming near the place. At last, one of them saw a woman apparently doing some farm work in broad day. His suspicions were not much roused until he took out his telescope, and, not being able to find out what she was at, determined to ascertain. After a little manœuvring, they surprised her in the very fact. She

had several snares set, which she always took care to do in the middle of the day, taking them up in the evening. No one ever suspected her, and the keeper declared they were the neatest snares he had ever seen. Some years ago I caught two equally absurd poachers. Returning home from shooting one Saturday evening, my dog was caught in a snare. I immediately fixed one of the rabbits I had shot in the dog's predicament, and set a watch. No one came near the snare until next day, when two little fellows, about ten years old, made their appearance, and, as soon as they had pounced on the rabbit, were pounded themselves.

Every Highland district is infested by its own set of poachers, more or less, according to circumstances. There is a family likeness in most of these biped vermin, which is easily accounted for by the manner in which they spend their life. For the most part they have an active walk, a quick eye, and long sight, all very necessary accomplishments for a hill poacher, and much improved by constant use. Their expression is generally shy and repulsive, and strangely belies their free step and almost graceful bearing. Of the many dozens I have seen and conversed with, few have been distinguished by any other characteristics. Two exceptions to this general rule occur to me, and both, though very different from each other, were no ordinary men.

When I first knew Gregor More of Callander, his poaching days were over; for he had a mortal disease upon him, from having lain out in the fields one cold night when intoxicated. He still managed to saunter down the river, and to give those beautiful sweeps with his line and salmon fly which were the admiration of the whole

clachan. He engaged to shew me the casts the first time I fished the Teith; and, from the character I had heard of him, I was not prepared to be prepossessed by his appearance. Drunkard, poacher, outlaw, (for he had been outlawed for non-appearance after thrashing several fellows in some broil,) I expected a mixture of cunning and ferocity, and had my doubts whether he would play me fair in pointing out the river. At a little distance, a tall, respectably dressed man, with his plaid slung over his shoulder, and a little terrier dog at his foot, seemed shaping his course towards me. When he approached, he looked me full in the face, took off his oil-skin cap, and made a respectful bow. I had appointed Gregor to meet me a little further down, and now thought, can this possibly be the man? He at once put me out of doubt by remarking upon a few flies round my hat, that they were too light for "oor water," but one or two might do. I looked at him with some curiosity; a nobler specimen of manhood I had never beheld. Upwards of six feet high, of the finest herculean proportions, and straight as an arrow, he seemed equally formed for activity and strength. There was nothing mean or sneaking about his manner. His face was open and manly, and, despite the sad discipline to which he had exposed both mind and body, he had not effaced the natural and sure marks of force and truth from his countenance. Although wan and emaciated, there was a coolness, a will to dare, in his eye, backed by his tremendous shoulders and still powerful frame, that I could not look at him without thinking on the words "majestic tho' in ruins."

I had now no more qualms about Gregor's sincerity—and well and faithfully did he repay my confidence—so

well, that he gained the ill-will of many of the Callandar fishers. One ungainly little bullet of a fellow especially, who gloried in a pair of fat stumps which he called "tight legs," and the bust of a man double his length, was particularly indignant that Gregor should have shewn all the good casts, "which a man micht hae ta'en lang eneuch to fin oot for himsel." Gregor told him at once that he would also guide me along the opposite side, whenever it was my "pleeshur to go."

But Gregor was equally knowing in the passes of the red deer as the haunts of the salmon. It was alleged against him by the foresters that he "kent" every favoured track as well as themselves. He was also a first-rate marksman with a ball, and generally carried off the prize at the St. Fillan's games. When talking to him, it was impossible not to be struck with the point of what he said; and his superiority in these sports over his fellows no doubt lay, in bringing to bear upon them the full weight of his original mind.

It was a constant remark in summer that, whenever you "kent whuskey on Gregor" you might be sure he had taken a salmon. To eat his fish was to say the least improvident, as bringing no supply when the fishing was over and he unable to work. But to drink them! Alas for poor Gregor in the winter. Want, of course, came then, and I was apprized of his destitute circumstances. I sent a man on whom I could rely to procure him food; but upon no account to give him the money to spend for himself. About new year, however, when whisky is free, Gregor and another man quarrelled about some flies, which the former had agreed to dress. Every one said that the man behaved shamefully, considering that Gregor's hands

were in a manner tied. He set up "an awfu' tongue," till at last Gregor's blood boiled, and he chased him out of the house into the village. The constables apprehended Gregor; he was tried, and sentenced to be transported. But, poor fellow, his shattered frame pined in the confinement of a gaol. He soon broke completely down when deprived of the fresh air on the banks of his own Teith; and, before the time for his embarkation arrived, he was summoned to take a longer voyage, and to a country from which he should never return *.

Very unlike Gregor More was —— ——. Strange to say, he had once been a "placed minister of the Kirk," (answering to a beneficed clergyman,) and, although he often returned late on the Saturday night, after being all the week poaching the deer, his sermons were both clever and popular. I met him once when traversing a wild range of hills, and was impressed both with his general information and the courtesy of his address. He had much to say and said it well; yet, notwithstanding the blandness of his manners, you could not help feeling that interest or passion were the main-springs of all his actions; as for principle, that he would inwardly sneer at the very name. He was an athletic, handsome man; but his expression, though bold and confident, was selfish and wily. The following anecdotes, illustrative of his character, are capital specimens of the man.

He had shot a deer in a very out-of-the-way recess

* To my shame and sorrow I record it—I did not see poor Gregor in his prison. It was eight miles distant, and, though I always meant to visit him, I never did. The remembrance has often grieved me. May this be a lesson to all who read it, "Never to put off till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day."

among the hills. While comfortably seated upon his quarry, enjoying a pinch of snuff in all the luxury of success, an intrusive face, followed by a gun, poked over the adjoining dike*. "Leave that deer, or I 'll blow your harns aboot your lugs." —— had neglected to reload his rifle; so, without a moment's hesitation, he shouldered it and paced slowly up the glen. As soon as he got a knoll between him and the unceremonious stranger, he loaded as quickly as possible—took a long circuit, and came down behind the identical treacherous dike. Quickly shewing the same startling apparition of a face and rifle, he commanded his rival instantly to take himself off, *but to leave his gun.* The man was in the act of "gralloching"† the deer, and at once saw there was nothing for it but to obey. —— kept his gun for some time, and often said, had he asked for a bit of the deer as a favour, he would have been welcome to a side of the venison, as the other was all he needed; and, indeed, the stranger's assistance in conveying it was of far more consequence at that time than half of the deer.

The next adventure of this worthy licentiate is a melancholy one. He and a friend, equally partial to a bit of fat venison, had agreed upon a night expedition, for the purpose of stealing a deer. They were rather at a loss for a driver; so, partly by threats and partly by persuasion, they almost forced a young shepherd to accompany them. Their guns were loaded with "swan post," to make sure work; and they were each placed under the ridge of the hill, to command the sky line, and thus have the deer between them and the light. The shepherd appeared on the ridge, and, extending both his arms above his head, as

* Stone wall without lime. † Cleaning.

a signal that the deer were coming below, was mistaken by —— for a stag's head and horns, and shot dead upon the spot. Quickly perceiving his mistake, he rushed up, and, carrying the dead man upon his shoulders, he pitched him over the adjoining precipice, and made his companion take an oath that he would never divulge the secret. The Highlanders are a quick-witted people, however, and it was whispered that there was a little round hole in the shepherd's bonnet, which corresponded with another in his forehead, that was never made by a dash against the rocks. Some time after, the quondam minister's friend let out, in his cups, the above particulars. But few care to deny that the "puir lad's" death was occasioned by a false step over the ravine, and the night wind still howls round his lonely cairn at the foot of the rocks.

THOMAS A' THING.

Among the Scottish peasantry, one very often meets with what is called "a character." Traits of individuality, whether personal or national, are more apt to be rubbed off among the trading ranks, their outward deportment and speech being so much borrowed from each other.

The Scotch peasant, feeling himself perfectly independent of every one, except his laird, is not very lavish of his courtesy towards strangers. Indeed, his manner is often far more surly than he intends; but whatever civility he does yield is pretty sure to come from the heart. Any one accustomed to speak much with these people must be very unlucky if he does not often meet with something original, and the following is barely an average specimen of what may be expected.

Thomas a' Thing (all things) was a native of Perthshire, and when very young came to settle upon my father's estate. He had a code of honesty which, I have heard it pretty broadly asserted, was a convenient one for himself, as he allowed no law or licence except to No. 1, while his uncompromising conduct to Nos. 2, 3, and 4, gained him many enemies, as well as my father's protection. But, after a few threats from his neighbours of "putting the bodie i' the loch," he was left to take his own course. Thomas's face is no bad index of his temper.

A long drooping nose and peaked chin, small fixed eyes, and thick heavy eyelids. In stature, he is much below the middle height, and his very walk, *like Venus's*, makes known the man. It is neither fast nor slow, and seems to say, "I 'll no neglec' my business, but for a' that there 's nae thrift in a hurry."

The avocations of Thomas a' Thing, as his title imports, are manifold. He can turn his hand to most things, without being very skilful in any. Mason, plumber, painter, glazier, rat and mole catcher, vermin-killer, with many other et ceteras, are all alike to Thomas; but, from his love of natural history, the latter pursuits are more congenial to his taste. A chat with Thomas on these subjects was a sure specific against the spleen, and, if his conclusions were often wrong, he sometimes related from his own observation facts both curious and interesting. In winter he was always employed as one of the game-watchers, and, although he used openly to admit he was "nae great soger," yet he often showed more pluck than those who pretended they were.

Thomas returned one morning from the islands with a prisoner in the stern of his boat, and his quaint grave relation of the particulars, in presence of his captive, was truly comical. He had with his enormous telescope discovered four Leven printers, poaching flappers. They had lighted a fire, and begun to cook some of their spoil. He rowed to the other side of the island, and then, winding round, got between them and their boat. He then cocked his pistol, and, like another Robinson Crusoe, dashed single-handed into the midst of the four. They all sprang to their legs and ran different ways; but Thomas, choosing out the man who took the least

direct line to their boat, endeavoured to cut him off from his companions. The fellow, however, had good wind, and by sundry doubles managed to reach the shore where the boat *was*. But his faithful allies, thinking it prudent to throw a sop to this terrible Cerberus, had left their companion and pulled away. The printer's heart now completely failed, so, wading into the water, as the stag at bay, awaited his pursuer's approach. Thomas, with his pistol still on full cock, and *carefully selecting* the nearest point on the shore, took deadly aim, and commanded him instantly to surrender. The fellow, now fancying that death was staring him in the face, fell down on his knees *in the water*, and begged for mercy. This was granted him, on condition of immediately shipping himself on board Thomas's craft. He then uncocked and replaced his formidable weapon, which, he afterwards told me, *had never been loaded!*

But it is only in calm clear weather that trespassers have anything to fear from Thomas's prowess. He has a perfect horror of winds and waves, and would not trust his "frail bark" upon the loch in a storm for any guerdon that could be offered him. We had been after wild swans one day, when unfortunately the wind rose a little. He became so paralyzed with terror as to be useless at the oar, so we placed him at the helm. His great object then was to steer in for the shore, so that we were in continual danger of being stranded on some sunken rock. We ordered him peremptorily to put out a little, when he answered in a perfect agony, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, I 'll gang up as high as ever ye like, but oh! keep me frae the water." In justice to Thomas, I must say, that I have seen him in a situation on the roof of a house

which I would not have exchanged with him for a good deal.

Thomas has a great opinion of his own powers of reasoning. He will not succumb even to the minister, certainly not to the schoolmaster; but he has always tact enough not to get beyond his depth, and, if driven to give an opinion on any point where he is not quite sure, he generally evades the difficulty by saying, "Weel, gentlemen, ye maun jist consult yer ain raison." There is at these times a grotesque assumption of dignity, as he measures out his reply; and, indeed, at all times a certain air of innate pomposity, that prevents one from addressing him otherwise than by his full designation, however tempted by wind or distance to call out "*Tom.*" As to his wardrobe, it is certainly not very smart, with the exception of an old weather-beaten tarpaulin, which is rather gaudy than becoming. He always gives it a fresh coat of paint, to keep out the November rain, when he is painting a door or rail, so that it constantly changes from yellow to pea-green, and from pea-green to sky-blue. Thomas meanwhile changes little himself. He is philosopher enough to be contented with his lot, thoroughly enjoying his book on a winter evening; the more so, if it "trates of nateral history." He continues to plod on his way, and even John Sly, who has the reputation of being a wag, and is a tailor to boot, whose quick grey eye looks as if winking at the sun, to take the shine out of him, has ceased to exchange a banter, having often found to his cost that there was more point and sarcasm in Thomas's wisdom than in his wit.

THE BASS ROCK.

THIS singular cliff of the sea has been the subject of many pages and many prints; but no description can lessen the amazement felt on beholding it for the first time. I had been familiar with much of our sternest coast scenery, had shot sea-fowl on the Clet of Caithness, and stalked seals under the savage and perpendicular rocks of Morayshire; but there is a grandeur about this solitary giant of the deep which is different from any of the wildest scenes I had gazed upon before.

When nearing the Bass, the ochre-coloured lichen which covers many of the rocks, contrasted with the white guano of the sea-fowl, and the white feathers of the solans, has, what painters call, a "fine pictorial effect." But when the boatmen pull slowly under the beetling cliff, studded from top to bottom with rank upon rank of living fowl, one is rather paralyzed than impressed with the stupendous scene.

At the time I was there, a raven's nest was fixed near the top of the western side. Three of the young, in appearance no bigger than blackbirds, were peering over the side. I could scarcely believe they were not jackdaws. The Peregrine falcon had also built outside the tower, and was wheeling aloft in company with the geese. I pointed him out as a sparrow hawk, and was equally

astonished when assured by the old boatman that he was "the blue hunting hawk." His nest was afterwards harried by a boat's crew, from North Berwick, who came for the purpose in the night. Well did I know the peregrine, and had often admired his graceful bearing among his native hills. The sable tenant of desolation was an equally familiar acquaintance; and that I should have so strangely mistaken both was sufficient proof of the vast height to which I looked.

Intending to shoot some specimens, I had brought my duck gun; and, at the first shot, killed a puffin or sea parrot, called a Tommy Norie by the old sailor in command of our craft. These pretty birds are very shy, although a good many haunt the landing bay. They always lay their one egg out of sight, and never upon the ledges of the rock. One or two were hatching in the holes of the prison where our fearless reformer was confined; when peeping out with their quaint bills, they had an ancient look that reminded one of sturdy John, with his slouched hat, looking out of his loophole window.

The razor-bills are now scarce on the rock; they are more retired in their habits, and apt to conceal themselves in the clefts. I was fortunate in getting a chance at a very fine one flying past, and knocked him over. There are none of the small black guillemot on the Bass, although they often hatch on the Island of May. The common kind, called by our boatmen "marrats," are very numerous. They are ranged along the cliffs like companies of soldiers; and half-a-dozen might often be strung at a shot. The kittiwakes are always perched at a good height upon a narrow ledge. I shot a couple of these beautiful little gulls at one discharge, which toppled almost into the boat.

A few knots were flitting from rock to rock at the base; I also slew a couple of them.

There is a long narrow cavern right through the island, which every year harbours a pair of small green cormorants or shags; but the great cormorant only frequents the Bass in winter. We rowed into this cave and hallooed several times. Just when we had got to the point where a sulky rock barred our further progress, and given up hope, out she flew over our heads, and within ten yards' distance. I stumbled, from the looming swell, in rising to fire, or I could easily have shot her. I did not want a specimen, so it was just as well the poor bird escaped.

We now landed at Tommy Norie Bay, and ascended the rock. Rabbits had been introduced by the present tenant some years ago, and have increased to a great extent. They were popping in and out of Blackadder's cell; a most wretched hole, with a small aperture for a window. We were told, however, that when removed there, from one much more comfortable, his health had wonderfully recruited; a circumstance I could nowise attribute to any salubrity in the abode, but to the merciful care of God over his faithful servants.

The rabbits seemed also to have taken a great fancy to the old chapel. Several were dotting about inside, among the nettles, and had no means of exit, as we stood at the door. Their only enemies here are the raven and the peregrine. We saw the bones of a guillemot, which the latter had lately picked. On the top was a colony of gulls. There were two pairs of the greater black-backed or giant gull, and several pairs of the herring-gull. We were fortunate in spying one of the nests of the giant with two eggs. The boatman assured us they were fresh, as three

was the usual number. Shortly after, we detected a herring-gull's with the full complement. The old tar was more doubtful of them. We therefore took the whole lot to what they call "the Spring;" (though one accustomed to the pure springs of the Highlands is loath to allow it the name;) and old Jack was right, for the large gull's eggs sank like stones; while the herring-gull's rose up on end, but did not come to the top. We thus saw that they had been sat u p time, but not long enough to prevent them from being blown. There are one or two more of these wells, from half a foot to three feet deep, with soft oozy bottoms. They afford drink to a few sheep pastured upon the rock. At the fall of last year, there were ten white-faced, seven-months' old, lambs put on; but the half died. Had they been the black-faced, and a little older, they would have thriven apace; as the grass is very nutritious, and there is fine shelter in the clefts from every winter storm, whatever its drift.

If the look-up was astounding, the look-down was appalling. I certainly felt little inclined to covet the esteemed post of cliffman; which office, the old sailor told me, with no small pride, his father had held for thirty years. He had succeeded him for a few years; but gave it up, as he was too weak to throw the young solands clear of the rock into the sea beneath. To do this effectually requires a very powerful arm. Many years ago, an aspiring blacksmith, trusting to his ponderous strength, offered to descend the Bass Rock. The ropes were adjusted, and he was lowered over the first shelf. As soon as he caught sight of the blue sea, and abyss between, he went raving mad and would not move. The people in the boat below perceived his state, and made signs to let

him down, which was done by main force. It took several men to hold him in the boat; but, in about a month, he regained his faculties. He is now an old man; but to this day has never spoken slightingly of a cliffman's duties, or volunteered his unsolicited services.

About sixty years ago, when Canty Bay was much infested by smugglers, there lived below Tantallan a family of the name of Kelly. They were men of great resolution and herculean strength. The old tar said he had seen one of them take a pipe of smuggled wine upon his knee and drink out of the "bunghole." He was not at all pleased to see me smile at the relation of this feat. The grandson of this family had the reputation of being the best cliffman that ever descended the Bass. Upon one occasion he was searching above, and one of his uncles in the boat below; a very small pebble was dislodged near the top, and struck the uncle upon his thick sea hat. It cut through the hat, stuck into his skull, and, before they could row ashore, he had nearly bled to death. The geese are sometimes maimed in the same way.

Adams, the renter of the Bass, is very dexterous in the management of the ropes above; which considerably lessens the risk of descent. There are regular periods in the year for this perilous work. The first search takes place at the beginning of summer, to gather the eggs of the guillemots, kittiwakes, &c.; and another in August, to collect the young gannets, which are stripped of their down, and then sold in the Edinburgh and other markets for sixpence apiece. The eggs of the gulls and kittiwakes are excellent; but those of the guillemots, razor-bills, and puffins, are rank tasted.

I was amused to see the high mark they set upon the

"purple geese," or those which have speckled backs, in consequence of not having quite shed the brown feathers. They are about three years old, and the beauty of the bird is in exact ratio to the brown spots on its back. For my part, I thought the pure white much handsomer. To please the old boatman, I shot a "purple," as well as a snowy specimen to stuff, and another pure white bird for his feathers, to dress sea flies. They are superior for this purpose even to those of a swan.

Numbers of gannets flitted past with billfuls of decayed sea weed for building their nests. They were formed entirely of this material, as we ascertained from examining the habitations of the two colonies which have been obliged to nidify on the top of the rock, all the shelves and ledges on the face being forestalled. They were so tame at these two places as often to refuse to move until kicked off the nest. They then stood chattering with open bill, and if you attempted to touch them would inflict a severe bite. Their threatening attitudes were ludicrously pompous.

One year, the whole west side of the rock was depopulated, from fishermen and others having shot them, when they wandered up the firth in August, after an unusually long continued shoal of herrings. The manner of the soland's attack upon these shoals is very curious. From a height of fifty or sixty feet, he comes down into the deep head foremost, with the solidity of a stone. I have watched a dozen follow each other in regular succession—keeping as true time as the ticking of a clock. When they emerge, they don't repeat the operation for some time, and fly out of the water with a lazy lagging flap.

Gentlemen often practise rifle shooting at the geese. The site of some of their exploits was pointed out. One

inviting snip of rock juts out upon a line with the walls of the fortress, where the riflemen take their station. They have seldom long to wait ere a gannet settles upon this point. It was called "Baird's shot," from some steady-handed Baird having frequently perforated his goose. Upon looking steadily at the distance, I could not reckon it more than seventy or eighty yards. Taking everything into consideration, the cool post of the shooter, and the fair position of his mark, a first-rate rifleman ought seldom to miss it.

The only small birds I saw on the Bass were a couple of rock pipits, feeding among the withered sea-ware close to the landing bay. Their nest no doubt was near, and they had chosen a place to build it upon, which did not belie their name. Those inheritors of dilapidation and decay, the jackdaws, sum up the zoology I noticed on the Bass Rock. The old rampart walls and chapel had most likely tempted them over the sea from Tantallan Castle.

Having satisfied my curiosity, and procured all the specimens I wanted, we hoisted our sail and steered for Canty Bay. Numbers of the common gull were flitting about us on our passage, although I saw none on the Bass.

When stripping the soland of his best fly feathers, old Jack remarked that the wing pinions were excellent for writing quills. He had often commissions from the village teachers in the neighbourhood for a supply. There was a good deal of oil about them, which the schoolmasters extract by cutting off the end of the quills and soaking them in warm water. I took out my penknife and made one or two into toothpicks; upon which Jack assured me that I would find them "far praeferable to a prin" (pin).

There can scarcely be a more inviting resting place than

Canty Bay; a cheerful sunny beach of smoothest sand, inclosed by rising hillocks covered with wild flowers; the bold ocean waves rolling before, and the bolder ocean rock in full view. I now joined our party there, who had been busily giving books, &c., among the few cottages which lie in one sheltered corner. A poor man, whom reason had left, lay basking on the grass with a number of children playing all round him. He seemed gentle and kind to *them*, though no others dared to interfere. Sorrow had left its deepest traces on his poor old mother's face. Suffering of many kinds met our eyes; and we were painfully impressed with the contrast between the outer forms of nature and these poor wrecks of human kind.

CRAP-NA-GOWER.

THE heather was bare and run to seed, the bell had long faded, and the grouse were wild and packed, when I received a note from my brother to say "that, in consequence of the mischief the flock of wild goats had done to the newly planted trees on his deer island, he had determined to extirpate them; but had reserved the two old Billies for my rifle." Well pleased, I obeyed the summons.

The evening I came to Rossdhu was dull and cold; rather *watery* looking for the west; but at grey of next morning I threw up my window, and was happy to find that it had cleared to bright starlight, with a crisp night frost. The ivy owl was sounding his melancholy note, foreboding abdication, while old chanticleer welcomed the first faint streaks of the dawn by a blast from his cheery trumpet. It had a curious effect, and seemed a contention between the spirits of night and morning. It was a good omen, for the sun rose in cloudless lustre, and by breakfast-time was flaming down upon the antiquated beeches, now in their rich and variegated autumnal tints, and casting his warmest glow over the red and withered bracken upon the slopes of the distant hills.

I found the bearded chief was at least ten years old, and his henchman about two years younger. They had been

the progeny of a cross between the original wild black goat of the rock, and a tame white Billy of very large size, who fell a victim to the change; having hanged himself by the horns on a yew-tree, in attempting to feed upon the higher branches. They had been bred among the craggy ravines on the unfrequented part of the island, and had never left them. A four-oared yawl was soon manned by hardy Highlandmen, and we pushed off for Crap-na-Gower.

There is nothing more exhilarating than the air of these calm autumn mornings. The breath of spring may be more fresh and fragrant, but it is not so buoyant nor clear. The little robin seems to feel its effect; for his monotonous but plaintive wail is always louder then, and his bows made with greater spirit. Our loch was calm as glass, and reflected the wooded islands and copses of various hues, relieved here and there by the dark Scotch firs, with their knotted and twisted branches. A black-backed or giant gull, perched upon a large stone, at the end of Inch Moan, was shouting his rough music (which sounded doubly atrocious over the calm expanse) to another couple, floating at a distance so airily upon the clear water, they scarcely seemed to touch it. The giant gull is a beautiful fellow, with his snowy breast and dusky wing; and, barring his voice, is the greatest ornament to our inland lochs, during summer and autumn, of any bird except the osprey.

Leaving master black-back in possession of his platform, like many as noisy an orator equally au fait at gull rhetoric, we stood out for the middle of the Loch, in order to have a good view of the rugged part of Inch Lonach, the territory of the goats. As we expected, we soon twigged

their white coats in broad contrast to the dark heather and darker yew-trees. Upon inspecting them through our telescopes, we found they were in a sort of rocky hollow, a capital situation for stalking, and busily engaged in cropping the lower branches of a venerable yew. I saw, with pleasure, that there was considerable difference in their size. When we got to the island, they told us that we could not help knowing the patriarch, as his horns came down to the small of his back.

As my rifle was only a single barrel, I was anxious to make sure of *him* first, in case he might hide, if alarmed by my firing at the other. Should he do so, we might not find him again all day.

Crap-na-Gower, the stronghold of the goats, is perhaps the most fascinating spot of the far-famed Loch Lomond. It is placed midway between the lovely islands at the foot, and the rugged and romantic grandeur at the head of the Loch, and quite commands the best views of both. It rises perpendicularly out of the Loch, by an almost inaccessible succession of rocks and shaggy heather, full of deep holes and caverns. Seen at a distance, from a boat, with its wild goats browsing among the grey rocks and scaurs, shaded here and there by a clump of reverent yews, a finer study for the artist's pencil could not be found. It was to this lone spot, where the poor goats had braved the winter frost and summer sun of many a long year, that I now bent my steps; the messenger of their destruction.

We thoroughly knew all the passes, and stationed sentries in them to intercept the goats, should they attempt to cross to the other side of the island, which is about two miles long. When they found their progress blockaded, they would immediately return to Crap-na-Gower. My

business then was to find out the pass they would use on their way back, and lie concealed. This was not difficult, as the barricaders in front would give me the signal. A very slight one might suffice, as I was also well acquainted with all the back passes.

I took my telescope in my hand; and was followed by a keeper, carrying my rifle. A circuit of a mile, to gain the wind, brought us to the far side of Crap-na-Gower. We were then about a quarter of a mile to leeward of the two poor goats, who were unsuspectingly munching their delicious repast of yew-twigs, in the full enjoyment of a midday sun. Our near approach was over a succession of rocks and knolls covered with heather, so long as nearly to reach the waist. We were constantly kept upon the alert, for this heather often concealed holes that it would have been no joke to have stumbled into; and were also annoyed by the *sunk rocks*, which are often covered as effectually by this long heather as by the waters of the deep.

Having gained the knoll, on the other side of which we hoped to find our victims, we held a consultation as to the point of attack. This arranged, we slunk very warily round the angle of the knoll, in case the goats had moved. It was well we were so cautious, for scarcely had we turned the peak, when the head and long horns of one of the hirci rose into view, not more than fifty yards off. He was rearing himself upon his hind legs to reach the branch of a yew-tree, which made the apparition of his head so sudden! I at once dropped into the long heather, and beckoned to the keeper for my rifle. When I crawled forward upon hands and knees, it was quite evident the poor creature had no idea of an enemy. He continued his

yew-cropping, occasionally scratching his shoulder with his long pointed horn, which seemed admirably adapted for the purpose. Sometimes he would rear himself upon his hind legs, to seize a twig just out of his reach when on all fours. I was quite amused at his dexterity, and the length of time he could remain in this erect posture.

All my endeavours to ascertain whether he was the ten or eight year old, were unavailing, and it was impossible to move further; as, in trying to get a sight of the other, I might probably scare both. From his position being rather above me, he looked very imposing, and I felt pretty sure he was the patriarch. Raising my rifle by inches, I fired. The ball struck him true in the centre of the shoulder; but, from his being above me, it took a slanting direction (as we afterwards found), and he did not drop. Up I started; and, at the same instant, the old goat bounded from the opposite side of the tree, and took the lead of his wounded companion. It was now apparent I had struck the junior. A severe race the keeper and I had to keep sight of him; but in vain. The last we saw of him was lagging far behind the other, his snow white shoulder bedabbled with blood. He soon after disappeared among the rugged ground, and was seen no more that day. The old chief, however, kept on at a swing gallop by himself. Knowing that our sentries would soon turn him, and that his object would then be the rocks of Crap-na-Gower, we kept watching for the signal which was to make us aware of his course. It sounded; and I was again at my post for a shot.

After waiting for half an hour, I saw the tips of his horns coming straight for my ambush, and making for the wilds of the island; which, if he gained, adieu to him for

that day. Before he quite came up, I raised myself and fired. He halted, and changed his course, but I was up to him. I knew that if I could, by taking a short cut, gain the pass where it entered Crap-na-Gower, I should be pretty sure of an excellent chance. Billy had a long circuit to make, and was, moreover, a good deal blown, so the odds were in my favour.

Throwing off my shooting jacket, waistcoat, and neck-cloth, I rushed away at full speed, though in danger every moment of tumbling into one or other of the *natural* pitfalls, or of knocking my rifle to pieces against a rock. Panting and toiling under the burning sun, I at last arrived at the pass; and had scarcely five minutes to recover breath, when William, equally done up, appeared, thundering over the adjoining height. I was in no hurry this time, and allowed him to cross fair, and so present the full target of his side; as I well knew that nothing could keep him from the rocks but a rifle ball. Crack! The poor fellow gave a cry something between a bleat and a howl (it was far too human to be agreeable), walked on a hundred yards, and then stopped. It was plain his race was run. I loaded as quickly as I could, to put him out of his misery; but, whenever I attempted to move, he braced himself up for a last struggle. With one despondent look at his own Crap-na-Gower, which he now despaired of reaching, and was never to see again, he turned his back upon it, and hobbled slowly to the shore. I did not press him. Poor fellow! I felt too much for him for that. Notwithstanding my "successful skill," I was far enough from regarding him with "apathy." My great anxiety was to end his woes. I watched him to the shore, and then saw him wade out upon a rock surrounded by

water. Keeping out of his sight, I stalked him from behind a heathery bank, which ran parallel to the shore, till I got within thirty yards. When I peeped cautiously through the heather, he was standing with his side to me, and his head sunk down nearly to the rock, the very picture of meek despair! Resting my elbow upon the heather, to make sure, I aimed at his heart. He gave one brave bound from his rock to the shore, staggered, and fell quite dead upon the beach.

There were soon plenty of hands examining his wounds. We found the first ball had grazed his neck, although I ancied I had missed him altogether. It was a wonder to all of us how the second had not finished him, so fair was he struck. The third passed through his heart.

It was now agreed that we should separate, for a thorough search after the wounded goat. It proved unsuccessful, although we were assisted by half-a-dozen pair of active limbs and sharp eyes, the general birthright of Highlanders. The shades of evening drew on, and we were obliged to take to our boat.

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What motive was it that made me decline a shooting party next morning, and determine upon a second excursion to the Lone Isle? After the narrative of the preceding day, I have little right to expect belief, when I say it was compassion. I could not help thinking that the poor goat *might* be alive; and, if so, nothing awaited him but a lingering death of pain. Having quickly finished my breakfast, I was soon seated at the oar, with a sturdy partner, and pulling rapidly for the quiet strand.

The people of the island had been on the outlook; and,

about two hours before we came, had seen him slowly limping up a hill. With my attendant behind me, I immediately walked off in the direction they pointed out. I had not long to look. Upon the pinnacle of the hill, which commanded a view all round, sat the poor goat, evidently in dread of a surprise like yesterday's. There was no possibility of stalking him, and the moment he saw me, he rose leisurely to his feet and descended the hill on the other side. He then sauntered to the rocks on the shore, being quite unable for the steeps of Crap-na-Gower. We followed to the beach; but, upon getting there, he had hidden again.

After a search of many hours, my follower *winded* him. Upon looking cautiously all round, he detected him completely engulphed in heather, with rocks on each side, and only a small aperture by which he had entered this snug shelter. He had an instinctive knowledge the moment he was discovered; for he immediately rose and limped out of his retreat. The man hallooed to me, and I took my station upon a rock which commanded two passes, one of which he must cross, as he was unable to climb the high rocks. When he was within forty yards, I shouted to make him turn off the shore, and thus present a broadside. He only looked up languidly, and kept his course along the beach. He passed directly under me, at the distance of twenty yards, when I fired at the back of his neck, and hit him in the spine—of course his death was instantaneous.

Our boat was at the other side of the island, and we had no time to bring it round; so we could only leave him where he fell, and send early next morning to fetch him home. A light cobble and couple of gillies were along-

side of him by five o'clock; but, even before that early hour, Rob Roy's "bedrels, the corbies, and the hoody craws" had entered upon office. I made them welcome to their share; but preserved his head, horns, and skin, together with that of his chief; which are as handsome trophies of the chase as any I have in my collection.

A FEW HINTS ON DEER-STALKING, GROUSE-SHOOTING, AND ROE-HUNTING.

(Not mentioned in "The Moor and the Loch.")

In high wind deer are always difficult to drive. Should they make a *pause*, they will in all likelihood turn in the face of a hundred men, and not suffer themselves to be driven further. As the wind becomes stronger, the higher you ascend, the deer on the tops of the hills are most difficult to drive. The lowest ground always the best for *driving* on a windy day.

In south and west wind, the deer are far easier stalked, as the colder and sharper north and east keeps them always moving and beating against it. When fired at they will go double the distance with an east or north wind.

Deer will go far more readily to the high passes in the morning, and to the low passes in the evening; so this ought always to be attended to.

Never stalk *between* two herds, if it can be helped; it is always considered bad stalking.

Ox deer, or "heaviers" as the foresters call them (most likely a corruption from the French hiver), are wilder than either hart or hind. They often take post upon a height that gives a look out all round, which makes them very difficult to stalk. Although not so good when December is past, still they are in season all

the winter; hence their French designation. Yeld hinds are also fit for the table till the end of January. The latter are easily distinguished by an experienced forester, from their light colour. The ears of the "heaviers" are always cropped, that they may at once be known from the hinds. This deformity makes their hornless heads look perfectly hideous. When stags grow very old, their horns go back just like a tree going to decay.

The best time for a quiet stalking shot is either early in the morning or late in the evening, as the deer are not so much on the alert, and busy feeding. It is at these times also that they are apt to come down from the high to the low ground.

Some forests are so crowded with hinds and calves, that stalking between deer is often unavoidable: this is the most difficult of all stalks. You have to keep a look out upon the deer on each side as well as those in the middle which you are advancing on. Should those on either side catch sight of the sportsman, or get his wind, he may still have his shot, *if there is any cover in front*, by *running* forward under shelter of it. Sometimes when the deer on both sides have taken the alarm, even should the ground be bare, those in the middle will stand staring, trying to discover what had frightened them. Under these circumstances, whenever the sportsman sees the deer on either side begin to move, his only chance of a shot is to *run on;* and perhaps the attention of the centre ones may be so fixed on their companions as to allow him to get within range. When the wind is *fair*, the best plan is to have *good patience* until the deer feed up, without attempting to stalk between them. When you have a side wind, however, it is very difficult to manage,

especially with a train of men and dogs, to all of whom the stalker must give his signal at once, perhaps with only twenty yards of ground to come and go upon.

When stalking a herd, or between deer, *down hill*, the best way is to slide upon the back with your feet foremost. This can be done by leaning upon the elbows, and using the heels of the shoes to draw on the body. The knees will thus be prevented from rising too high. Should you attempt to crawl down head foremost, the back will often be two feet higher than the head, and the stalker never be aware of it. In sliding down the hill, both stalker and sportsman must have their eye upon the deer; and, if they raise their heads, must keep the exact position they were in when the deer looked up. It is very bad generalship, either with deer or wild fowl, to clap down quickly, as they at once see this manœuvre. Instead of doing so, remain steady as a rock, until the deer begin to feed again, or look in a different direction. Should they suspect you, and thus render it necessary to move out of sight, withdraw yourself *inch by inch*, so as to prevent their seeing the *least motion*. In stalking up hill, you must crawl sometimes upon hand and knee, occasionally flat upon your face when the deer come more prominently into view. As they always look down hill, greater caution is required than when stalking from above. Should two good stalkers be noticed by deer, one ought always to remain where they were first perceived; the other advancing alone. If the deer are in sight, and not far off, a knowing forester often restrains the eagerness of the novice, by telling him to "coont the grass as they go along;" that is, to count each deer as they raise their heads for a moment when feeding up.

This, by ensuring a very slow advance, doubles the chances of their escaping the notice of the deer, and keeps the young stalker more cool. The forester all the time has his eye on the leading deer. When selecting your hart, raise the rifle most leisurely to the shoulder. If brought up in a hurry, or in the same way that a quick shot takes aim with his fowling-piece, you are almost certain to miss.

A good forester generally becomes very nervous in the long run, from the bungling of some gentlemen, and the ill temper of others, together with his constant anxiety to procure them fair chances.

ROE-DEER.

When roes haunt a small belt of plantation, it is often impossible to say where they will break cover. The surest plan is to take a pass a little way off, as the roe, wherever it may break, soon falls into a beaten track when leaving one wood for another.

It is a rare thing to take a right and left at roe; they slip past so quickly, and generally in small numbers. I have known many old sportsmen who have shot them all their lives, and yet never killed a couple right and left. Blood-hounds are now coming into vogue, instead of fox-hounds, for running them out of thick coverts. From the truer nose, slower movement, and more deep-toned voice of the blood-hound, he is certainly far better adapted for the purpose. This noble dog is supposed to be the lineal descendant of the old deep-flewed English slot-hound, or talbot, and there is certainly little difference except in colour. The prevailing hue of the talbot was white, that of the blood-hound is black and tan. All the finer

qualities of the talbot have been sacrificed in his degenerate successor, the fox-hound of modern days, to acquire the great desideratum *speed*.

Never gralloch a roe near a favourite pass, *unless you wish it to be forsaken*.

GROUSE.

When a moor is regularly shot over, and the large packs thinned, grouse are less apt to flock early, which is often occasioned by several large packs joining company. Late in the season, before they are tamed by a frost, a windy day generally produces the heaviest game-bag to a good quick shot. When his dog points, the sportsman has generally a shrewd idea where to expect the pack, as they collect behind rocks and hillocks, most frequently on the lee side. They keep all together, so there is no danger of stragglers; and as they don't hear so well in windy weather, he may often pop upon them close enough for a capital right and left.

An indifferent or poking shot should choose a sunny calm day at this time of the year; for although birds rise at a longer distance, yet their flight is so much slower than during a breeze of wind, that the length of the shot *to him*, in both cases, would most likely be pretty much upon a par. Added to which, in windy weather, they are apt to fly as twisting and irregular as snipe.

In a breezy day, never range near those parts of your marches where the wind strikes fair from your own to the adjoining moor. If you do, most of the birds will fly out of your bounds, notwithstanding every effort to intercept them.

WOODCOCKS AND SNIPES.

THE habits of woodcocks and snipes cannot fail to interest every one who has opportunity for observing them. There is a method in their movements which arrests the attention of a naturalist, but, unless he is a sportsman too, they are less apt, than many other birds, to come under his notice.

The first few woodcocks generally arrive about the beginning of October. Their approach is always made known by the red-wing, which bird one cannot help connecting with the woodcock, as guests who commonly arrive together, however unlike in other respects. When woodcocks first come, they keep to the open ground, taking refuge in brushwood, rushes, or heather. At this time they are constantly found and pointed on the moors; comparatively few frequent the coverts, at least in the daytime—towards dusk, I have seen them come down to the springs. The first frost, however, drives them to the woods, where the ground is of course less hard. Should the weather continue severe, many take refuge under thick hollies or junipers, especially where these bushes are surrounded by plashy ground. It is worth notice, that if a woodcock is found at one of the covert springs, about dusk in October, he is sure to be at the same place in the daytime when the frost sets in. Each bird has its own fa-

vourite evergreen retreat, which it does not abandon till the weather becomes open. A good beater well knows that this bush should be struck smartly on the opposite side from the gun, or the woodcock is warned, and flies away hidden by the boughs.

During a long-continued tract of frost and snow, most of the woodcocks leave the inlands for the oak and larch belts on the coast, in order to feed upon the sea-worms within tide water-mark. This sea-ground, of course, is seldom much affected by frost, and is the last resource of the woodcock during a storm. In the severe winter of 1838–9, hardly a stray cock was to be found in the inland coverts after the first few weeks of hard frost. Numbers were seen, dead and dying of starvation, among the plantations which skirted the sea, even the sea-worm having failed about the end of that long-continued storm.

The passages of the woodcocks, either at evening flight, or from one part of a coppice to another, when flushed, seldom vary twenty yards. In beating *large* coverts, shots who are aware of this have a great advantage. After once seeing the bird fly, they can form a shrewd guess where to place themselves next time. By facing the beaters, and securing any opening that the cock may have skirted, they will rarely be disappointed, as every woodcock will be found next day at its former post, and take precisely its former course, *if sprung in the same direction.* Should the bush or tree be beaten on the opposite side to what it was the day before, the woodcock has likewise a well-known flight the reverse way. So certain is this propensity, that, even in long narrow strips of plantation, every woodcock flies to the side (unless prevented by bungling irregular beating) a short time after being

flushed—the sharp flyers a little further on, and the tame proportionally nearer. The flight of both can be easily calculated: and if there are two pairs of experienced shots outside the wood, one pair for the wild and the other for the tame birds, scarcely any escape without being fired at.

There are, however, many plantations, and these often the most noted haunts of the woodcock, which it is impossible to beat by the above methods. Few sportsmen would even walk through some of our tangled coverts in the Highlands, and shooting is out of the question

> "Where, sunk in copse, your furthest glance
> Gains not the length of horseman's lance,
> And oft so steep, the foot is fain
> Assistance from the hand to gain."

It is in such places that cockers and springers are of *real service.* The woodcocks generally fly straight over the tops of the trees, and drop down near the opposite side of the covert. Sometimes they take the whole round, and pitch close to where they were sprung.

Should one of these large circular belts be placed on the steep side of a hill, there is a capital opportunity for taking a lesson in the tactics of this bird. By placing yourself upon an opposite knoll, every flushed woodcock is immediately seen, and his course traced without the possibility of subterfuge or evasion. Many sportsmen place a marker upon this point; and are thus directed to the very spot where all the sprung birds have pitched. But if they had the patience to watch a few times for themselves, they would be amply rewarded by insight into the manœuvres of this interesting visitant. If sprung fairly, most of them will top precisely the same trees, and fly past the same

openings every time. Some will make it their rule to pitch down after taking one stretch across; others, by wheeling about, take two; while a few lazy ones may content themselves with a flight only half through the wood. If flushed a second time, however, their movements, *for that day*, are not so much to be depended on. Should the party of beaters be numerous and noisy, many of the woodcocks will drop down outside the covert; especially if much persecuted and driven about. Some sly old fellows try this ruse after their first flight. The sportsman, therefore, should always walk round the plantation, outside, before quitting it. But, as most of the birds will fly sharp, he must be prepared for snaps. The extreme regularity of the woodcock's flight has been proved to me, even after putting him up the second time. We flushed one in the Kilmun coverts, out of reach. He flew straight for a bit of marshy ground; some woodcutters were at work there, and prevented his settling. In a short time we noticed him come back, and light close to the same spot where he was first put up. He again rose wild; but my beater reminded me of the woodmen. So we stationed ourselves in the line of his return progress, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing him, as we expected, and I shot him flying over my head.

In overgrown larch plantations, with long bare stems, it is impossible to fire too soon; as all the shots must be taken before the birds rise to the branches. If, on the contrary, the covert is low, the cock should be allowed to get among the tree-tops; and there will, most likely, be opening enough for a quick shot. Otherwise, pick a snap through the *thinnest* screen of tree-tops and branches. To do all this, *mechanically*, requires both self-command and

long practice. Of course these remarks refer to large plantations, where there are no open spaces to take advantage of.

A few woodcocks remain to breed in this country; and nests of young are found, most seasons, in the heathery islands of Loch Lomond. When the summer is very warm, they, like the wild drakes, moult so severely as for a short time to be unable to fly. I have occasionally seen them in the twilight, after a calm, clear, summer day, chasing each other high in the air; making a piping noise not unlike the "blouting" of a mire snipe. In former times, I never heard of their nests being discovered: so, most likely, our less sunny summers have induced a sprinkling of them to remain the whole year. I have in my collection a couple of woodcocks' eggs, found in Inchtavanach, the spring before last.

The evening flight of the woodcock is rather earlier than the wild duck's. The shrill chirp of the blackbird is a good warning bell when to expect them. This chirpy scream of the blackbird generally begins a little before dusk; the woodcocks fly about dusk, and the ducks a little after. In a good place for evening flight, you may generally secure four or five fair chances at woodcock. A few cocks come to the coverts again in March, immediately before taking their final departure. As the ground is then soft, and plenty of worms, &c., to be found in every part of it, they are not so apt to frequent moist places; and may, in fact, be flushed in any part of the coppice. It is, therefore, scarcely worth while to beat for them.

Numbers of the mire snipe breed among the heather on our moors, and afford no small amusement to the grouse-shooter. I have often bagged four or five couple in a day,

when after grouse; merely picking them up as they came in the way. The young are constantly met with in all stages of progress; from the downy ball of a few days old, to the scarcely fledged bird, essaying its first tottering flight.

Jacks come in September, but are more local in their habits. They are found in considerable plenty on many of our more marshy moors. It is very amusing to witness the attempts of an indifferent shot at jack snipes in such open ground. They are easily found, by a good dog, as they have a strong scent; and, being close-lying birds, they generally spring within a yard of the sportsman's toes; who at last wishes his teazing game far enough, when a heroic jack doggedly offers another chance. A good shot will hit a jack even more certainly than a mire snipe.

In bare ground, I have frequently noticed both mire and jack snipes squatted before my dog's nose. Once I plainly saw the point of a mire snipe's bill stuck in the ground, ready to hoist him into the air. I watched narrowly, and, in taking wing, he used his long bill exactly as we would a walking stick. Snipes have the same predilection for a particular spot as woodcocks. One severe winter, my retriever sprung a mire snipe out of a puddle, close to the Gala water. It flew across the stream, and I fractured the tip of its wing just when it reached the other side. It fell among thick furze, and we were unable to find it. Next day my retriever picked it up at the same ditch, unable to fly a yard. It could only have recrossed the Gala by swimming.

A SPRING WEEK IN THE WEST HIGHLANDS, 1848.

THE lark, with his song of glee, and lapwings, as they wheeled about, tumbling and chasing each other, to their vernal scream of ecstacy, had given some cheerfulness to the dull sown fields of the Lothians, when a short tour was recommended for the health of my youngest child. I had seen enough of the lovely glen which separates the Holy Loch from Loch Eck, in my shooting and fishing excursions, to make me long to penetrate further; so with the hearty concurrence of my fellow travellers, it was to this inlet of the West Highlands that we directed our course.

An easy steam-passage brought us to Kilmun, and next morning we skirted the Echaig*, which, like a band

* I had this salmon-stream, and the shooting of Kilmun Hills, taken from Mr. Campbell of Monzie, and can confidently recommend both to any man who is a true admirer of wild sport. In addition to salmon and grilse, the river abounds with sea-trout and whitlings; I have killed forty in about six hours. Thews and sinews are required to travel the moor. It is a sort of peninsula, jutting out between Loch Long and the Holy Loch, on which account scarcely a bird escapes the boundary. The grouse are pretty regularly distributed, and, with really good dogs, no man need return dissatisfied. At the beginning of the season, when the tops of the hills are the best range, the eye rests upon views singularly bold and varied. For the first few weeks I generally averaged from twelve to eighteen brace a day, besides hares and snipe. The woodcock shooting is the best in Cowal-side.

of silver, unites the two lochs. Every object here was familiar. McErle's pool famous for a *stray* grilse. Ouig Hill, appropriately pronounced *wig* by the people, from its rough long heather, and Rashfield shielings, with their thatched roofs and smoky kipples, where the peat fuel gives a pleasant notice to the traveller that for once he is getting out of the reach of carbonic influence. With most of the inmates of these poor dwellings we were also well acquainted; and among them could place on record examples both of worth and happiness.

At a little distance, but only far enough to keep up his credit as a lone man, is the cell of the Hermit of the Glen. A less interesting specimen of this genus of mortals can scarcely be imagined. He seems to have courted solitude only for its notoriety; and instead of the anchorite's "crystal well," drinks freely and constantly of "*mountain dew.*"

This jovial recluse lays claim to the attention of all strangers; and, after repeated invitations, I once had the curiosity with some friends to visit the "wee place," as he calls his hut. His methods of making us understand that guests were expected to leave some donation behind them, as a trifling memento of the pleasure their company had given, were certainly ingenious enough; and after gaining his point, he in his turn volunteered to treat us with "The Braes of Balquhidder." And really it was worth a trifle, for he managed what I had supposed an impossibility; viz., to deprive the beautiful air and words of every vestige of harmony. But his grand recipe for drawing the purse-strings is practised upon his female visitors, and consists in enumerating the monied dames who were dying to share his eight feet by six

cabin, but they "never gaed near his heart," placing his hand most pathetically on the spot where that organ should have been! This stale trick, I am credibly informed, has maintained in full radiance his salamander of a nose for the last thirty years.

Like many anticipated pleasures, the unknown half of our day's journey did not come up to expectation. The rugged grandeur at the lower end of the glen soon blended into low hills and copses; but the drive along Loch Fine is certainly very beautiful. We slept at Inverary, and next day, after admiring the waterfall in Glenara, and walking up all the steep braes for the sake of the views, arrived at Dalmally.

Having despatched a messenger to the Black Mount to ascertain whether the sea eagle had built in any of the forest lochs, we stepped out as far as the little rustic bridge to enjoy the soft pure air. A well-known twitter greeted us, and there was the first swallow darting under the old arch of the primitive bridge, his steel-blue back glancing in the setting sun. "Two of them," shouted my eldest urchin, who, for great diligence in Greek and Latin, had been allowed to accompany us, "they *do* make a summer."

A car, containing two anglers and their attendants, now drove up. They had been fishing since morning at the falls of the Urchay, and taken a couple of salmon, one nine, the other fifteen and a half pound weight. The captor of the large fish was in great glee; for the landlord told me it was the "biggest" that had been caught since the season began. The weather had been so dry, and our time so limited, that my salmon rod and tackle had been voted supernumerary. I should now have had no objec-

tion to their company, especially as next day, being a festival of the English church, and all the fishers Englishmen, I should have had the river to myself.

The swallows were true prophets; next day was mild and calm, with a few clouds. After breakfast I walked to the cottage of one of the old fishing guides to borrow a rod, reel, and flies. "The river is so small, and the wind is so bad an *airt*, that unless it changes you would not get a rise," says old James McNicol. Seeing me rather incredulous, he added, "I will come down at one o'clock, and should the wind change we *may* get a fish." The wind had been in the same "airt" for the last week, and well did sly James know it would not change. The truth was, both he and the other old guide had been hired by the Sassenachs, and dared not go out, or even lend a rod or fly, as they of course wished to give the river a day's rest. I was not therefore surprised when McNicol made his appearance at one, with the excuse that he had to tie some small flies for Mr. ——. Opposition only put me upon my mettle. I borrowed an old rod from the waiter, while the landlord, by some secret influence, procured three of the most approved salmon flies, and engaged to send a post-boy who knew the casts.

Being thus pretty well equipped, I started about three for the falls of the Urchay. My boy, no contemptible bait-fisher for trout, begged hard to accompany me, as he had never seen a salmon killed. At the tail of the lowest pool I had the good hap to hook a fish. As I was far from placing implicit reliance in the waiter's tackle, it took some time to tame him, and when I fairly had him under my thumb, where was the gaff?

The beach, however, was good, and the post-boy handy, so we soon extracted a very fine eleven-pound salmon. The next pool was a long black whirling lyn, but we fished it blank; not a break or boil from top to bottom. We now came to a dangerous but very good cast. It was also deep and black, full of sunk rocks; and, should I hook a fish, it would soon show what the tackle was made of. At the very spot where I expected up he came, and now was the tug of war. The fish fighting for the rocks, and I doing my best to keep him clear of them, knowing that if he effected his purpose there was every chance of being cut. My tackle proved excellent; I fairly foiled him, and at last wore him away from the perilous rocks. The post-boy's hands again acted gaff, and brought to bank a noble fifteen pounder.

I was now quite satisfied, and despatched the ready-handed son of the whip for our car, which was put up opposite the place where I killed the first fish. At the very foot of this pool part of the stream flows near the opposite bank. More for the sake of instructing my boy in the mystery of throwing a long line than any sanguine hopes of a rise, I swept my fly twice over this bit of water. At the second throw up came a famous fellow. He turned his head down stream, and dashed along, making my reel ring. There was now a race different ways, my son for the post-boy, and I with the fish. Jehu came puffing like a grampus, ready to gripe his prey. He soon saw that his services would not be required for some time, as the salmon was fresh and strong, and making beautiful play. Patience and caution at length brought him to the bank; and for the first time the post-boy, after having a firm hold, lost it

from the strength of the salmon. It was a little while ere I could bring him within reach again, for the fright gave him fresh vigour; but the clutch at the root of the tail was more sure next time, and we landed the finest fish as yet taken in the Urchay since the season opened; sixteen pounds. I both hooked and killed every fish I rose, and with the same fly.

Here let me caution gentlemen neither to be too sanguine nor dispirited by the fishing guide's prognostications of success or failure from the weather. When you have good sport, they are sure to say the day is all that can be wished. If, on the contrary, you don't stir a fin, they will as certainly console you with some flaw in the wind, water, or sky, how propitious soever they all may have been. Catch them telling the angler (what is more often than not the true cause) that it is his own want of skill. The greatest bungler may more easily catch a salmon than one of these fellows making such a mistake.

Wild and uncouth were the exclamations and comments from a circle of highlanders, when the salmon were paraded before the inn; and truly absurd was the edification depicted in my little fellow's features, as he stared from one rugged weather-beaten face to another, severally delivering themselves of their Gaelic sentiments.

The cuckoo is a bird of bad omen if heard for the first time before you break your fast. So said some mountain sage to my little boy, who was unfortunately in that predicament. You are sure to fail in whatever you undertake immediately after; in other words, have "a gowk's errand." Nevertheless the unlucky gowk had brought us a fragrant morning, or more likely the fine morning had tempted the mal-a-propos call from the joyous bird. A

note from Peter Robertson was handed to me. The sea eagle had built upon the island of Loch Bah, but was shy and not sitting close yet. "It is all that nasty cuckoo," said my son. "Had you heard *it* in place of seeing the swallows, you would never have hooked the salmon."

There is often more earnest in these "saws" than grown people would be willing to admit. I have known a deerstalker refuse to go out, on a fine morning for the sport, if he saw a mouse on his kitchen floor at early dawn and *was unable to kill it*. The same man was confident of success should a cat jump out of a bush before him *when on his way to the hill*. He affirms that he never saw either omen fail. This man, from the braes of Athol, is now conducting a flourishing trade in Edinburgh, a clear-headed capital man of business, and quite as superstitious as when he left the glens many years ago *.

In defiance of the boding cuckoo I ordered out our vehicle for Inveroran. No votary of nature can follow the windings of this lovely strath of the Urchay without deep interest. The road runs parallel to the river nearly the whole way, and, by a little observation, one can scarcely fail of catching a passing glance at many of the creatures that frequent these lonely wilds. An alpine hare, now of a mottled blue and gray, bounded along the road before us for

* Like most highland poachers, he had two strings to his bow, and followed the lawful calling of a shoemaker to conceal, as much as possible, his depredations on the hills. He told me he had killed thirteen deer before breakfast time. When after grouse, he never wasted powder and shot upon ptarmigan, as they only fetched two shillings a brace then, whereas grouse brought three and sixpence. The ptarmigan were so plentiful in the forest, that he assured me a fair shot might have bagged ten brace in a few hours.

a considerable distance. She fortunately did not cross it—that *would* have been a clincher to the cuckoo! A roebuck was browsing upon the shoots of the birch and hazel-bushes that fringe the river, not fifty yards off. He only stared at the carriage and "dandered" up the opposite hill. And now the dark outline of Bendora rose before us, whose slate-coloured crags add greatly both to the gloom and grandeur of the forest.

Arrived at Inveroran, there was the characteristic sight of a fine herd of the mountain deer, greedily feeding a little below the crest of the near hill, upon the young sweet grass which had sprung up from a long stretch of burnt heather. The telescope was soon brought to bear upon them, and some fine harts singled out. By the time we had dined they had fed down to the adjacent knolls.

At break of day the landlord's son and tax-cart were at the door of the inn to convey us part of the way to Loch Bah. Peter Robertson was all ready to jump in, when we passed the handsome new forest lodge where he has taken up his abode. We halted our cart at the nearest point to the loch, and cut across on foot through the heathery morass. A few redshanks, like well set up sentries, were stalking upon the mossy banks at the water's edge, and a stray one occasionally took a short flight from one little tarn to another, piping its desert cry, while numbers of curlews serenaded us from the clouds with their pleasing mournful scream.

When we had picked our steps through this boggy ground, Loch Bah burst upon our view, and the eyrie itself was just discernible upon the birch tree in the islet. Peter's glass was fixed, and the bird soon distinguished

upon the nest. About half a mile from the islet, and close to us, was the shallop, which we were in the act of launching when a sound, something between a "squeal" and a whistle, rose and died away upon the still solitude. I had never heard anything like it before so singularly plaintive. It had something of the modulated whistle of the buzzard or the kite, but far more sweet, soft, and musical, so fitted to the scenery and the place. It seemed to rise in a low cadence from the shore, and then melt into the clear air. "That 's the otter," quoth Peter, "I 've heered them say he gi'es a whustle sometimes." It was soon apparent that he had guessed right, for the "whustle" came next time from the loch, and a gentle break, followed by its circles, showed where the otter had popped up its head, after swimming under water from the shore.

A difficult channel we had to steer through on our way to the islet, and although we changed our land pilot into a water one, and placed him in the bow to boot, our skiff was frequently bumped, and once nearly lifted clear of the water by the numerous sunk rocks.

All sitting birds face the wind to prevent its ruffling their feathers, so, knowing where the eagle's head would be, we attempted to come in behind her. But when we got half way, she flew off her eyrie and lit upon a tree, her white tail shining like the silver moon. We were all watching her, when the other also flew off the nest and settled near his mate. This did not look well for a shot —the hen evidently was not sitting. When we neared the islet, they both flew out to meet us, uttering their shrill scream. Sometimes they floated at an immense height, and then, cleaving the air in their descent, flew round

their eyrie, beating with their wings, which made a hoarse, growling noise, like (forgive the comparison) the paddles of a steam-boat at a distance on a calm day.

Peter's great anxiety was to get me hid as quickly as possible, and a speedy job we made of it. I had hardly time to notice the terror of some deer rushing into the water to paddle across to the mainland, like Robinson Crusoe's savages, before I was ensconced under a heather and bracken screen. A small aperture was made for my gun-barrel, and from seven o'clock till one I was left alone on the island.

Meantime my companions rowed away to the far end of the loch, and having found a wild duck's nest full of fresh eggs, and kindled a fire, they soon, with the addition of our basket of provisions, turned out a most comfortable breakfast. The excitement of the moment quite kept down *my* hunger. Every time I heard an uproar among the small black-headed gulls, I was sure the royal pair were approaching, and soon their shadow passed over my ambush. They were generally swimming slowly, at a great height, and seldom came near the nest tree. Once or twice I heard the hollow rumbling, and they dashed past at the distance of sixty yards, but had I wished to take this random chance, it was impossible, as I only commanded the eyrie tree.

The intervals of their visits became longer every time. During one, a pert kestrel lit upon a twig not more than ten yards from the mouth of my gun. Shortly after, its mate perched upon the same branch, and both began to preen their wings without the slightest suspicion that their dreaded foe was closely watching all their motions.

At last the female eagle returned alone. She soon took

her departure, and we saw neither of them any more. Whether the sun glancing upon my gun-barrel had scared them, or the skiff upon the loch, we were unable to decide. There was not above half a foot of the barrel visible, but the eagle is of all birds the most wary, and nothing can elude its eye.

When Peter felt sure the game was up, he returned to release me from my watch. I consoled myself with a hearty breakfast and his assurances that we should manage better next year, if we were spared, by allowing the erne to sit hard before disturbing her. Had this been the case now I should certainly have had a fair shot.

There is often only one egg in the nest, but when there are two, one is generally addled. It is a curious fact that, in the year 1847, when there was a dreadful hurricane about the end of April, no eggs were laid in either the sea or golden eagles' eyries.

I examined carefully the erne's nest. It was very deep as well as round. There could not have been less than a cart load of large sticks and twigs. I had some curiosity to know whether both birds built in company, or if the male acted "cad" by bringing the materials while the female was the architect. Swans are very gallant in this particular, supplying their mates with aquatic plants and reeds, while they sit comfortably on the nest and weave its sides. The male erne, however, would have a far harder task. I once, with much interest, noticed a pair of baldcoots, on Duddinstone Loch, constructing their damp abode. The male dived to the bottom for the leaves of the water lily, and the female always came to the side of the nest to receive his billful, laying it along in a neat methodical way like a building mason.

The sea eagle is very fond of flappers, and no more frequent prey than a young wild duck, before it is able to fly, is found in her eyrie. She is not near so quick a game destroyer as the mountain eagle; hence grouse and ptarmigan are not so much the object of her pursuit. She is also less nice in her eating, and more apt to devour what she does not strike down. Even carrion does not come amiss sometimes, especially in winter.

A delicious afternoon enabled us equally to enjoy our return drive down the banks of the Urchay. The gorcocks, in the full pride of their scarlet combs, strutted often within pistol shot of the carriage, and at the foot of the strath, the larches which grew upon the river's bank had their customary complement of black game, perched as usual near the top, and busily engaged in nipping the young shoots. Within a short distance of the inn at Dalmally a brace of partridges were picking up the corn just sown by the landlord. The noise of our vehicle sprung them. Immediately an impudent sparrow-hawk, far less than the partridge, struck one down. I did not see the deed done, but our driver turned round, and with great animation pointed out the bush where the wounded partridge lay. The little assassin was beating a retreat, but left ample proof of his guilt in a shower of stolen feathers which streamed from him as he flew. He would be certain to return to his prey, and might easily have been trapped. No greater proof of the dire havoc hawks commit among game can be adduced, than the fact that they refuse everything they *don't* hunt down themselves. While, on the contrary, no birds are easier trapped, even at a stale bait, than kites and buzzards.

Once, and only once, I noticed a hen harrier devouring

what she had no hand, or rather foot, in killing. On Leny Môor I wounded a grouse, and marked the spot where it towered and fell. The scent was bad, and my dogs could not find it. Two days after I was ranging the same ground, and a female hen harrier rose out of the heather. She was giving the last polishing to the bones of my grouse. It is probable she might have noticed the bird fall, as hawks are very quick in detecting disabled prey. I have seen them single out the wounded bird from a pack, and stick to it closely. Upon one occasion a hawk made a desperate charge at a grouse I had actually knocked down, neglecting several others which rose at the same moment. I gave him an uncomfortable salute with my second barrel.

Next day was the last of our Highland trip, and my boy begged hard to be allowed to dedicate a couple of hours to the pike at Kilchurn. He had caught his bait before breakfast, and borrowed a pike tackle, the waiter's old rod, and a small rickety reel with *ten yards of very rotten line.* We walked down to the castle of Kilchurn, which is surrounded by a shallow reach of water, a sort of inclosed bay from Loch Awe, full of large pike. A boat is a great advantage here, where sunk banks and feeding grounds abound in every direction, as in many of the shallower highland lochs. We soon hooked a large pike, which ran out our morsel of a line, and then snapped it. He most likely found as little trouble in disgorging the hooks as in breaking the line, which the following fact may show, and I can vouch for the truth of it.

A Thames fisherman hooked a large "jack" when spinning at a mill tail for trout. Not having a disgorger at hand, he cut the line and threw the pike into a tub of

water, to keep it alive and fresh for sale the following day. To his amazement next morning, the creature had managed to cast up the eight-hook tackle, which was lying in the tub.

The two following instances of the pike's voracity are almost incredible, but both I can also certify. In the spring of 1841, two pike of twelve pounds weight were cast upon Loch Vennacher shore, each with a hold of the other's jaws, and quite dead. The second instance happened in Suffolk. A jack of only two pounds was found choked in attempting to swallow another of a pound and a half. The gentleman who saw them taken out, only a short time before, told me the fact.

But even these instances are equalled by the solemn toothless cod. A friend of mine was trolling in Loch Long, and hooked a seithe. An enormous cod seized the seithe, and paid the penalty by being brought into the boat himself. His girth seemed unnaturally large, and, upon opening him, a brown paper packet of sandwiches, enough for luncheon to a pretty large party, was taken out. They could not have been less injured, mustard and all, had the cod's stomach been a sandwich box.

Our pike has led me to digress. Having no more tackle, we contented ourselves, before joining the carriage which was to convey us to Inverary, with a view of the old castle, now very tottery and dangerous to ascend. Numerous daws were rejoicing in the holes and cavities. The osprey's nest formerly graced a high pinnacle, the owners having an abundant supply of food wherever they chose to seek it. Sea trout of a large size I have several times seen in the water eagle's nest; but seldom pike, and never flesh of any kind.

A gamekeeper wantonly shot the last of these beautiful birds that tenanted Kilchurn's turrets, and none have replaced them. The otter now has the whole of it to himself since the death of his rival; and, although seldom seen or hunted, except when the Urchay is frozen over, there are few places where such numbers abound.

THE OTTER.

This eccentric creature is so much hidden from notice, partly owing to its resources for concealment lying both in land and water, that its habits are not much observed, although so generally distributed throughout the three kingdoms. It excites greater attention on the rocky coasts from being occasionally hunted there. In the West Highlands, especially, many of the resident proprietors pique themselves on the excellence of their otter-terriers. Some few keep hounds for the purpose, but the terrier is a very good substitute in these wild districts, and of course far more easily procured.

A good otter hunt is a very curious sight, and from being able for the most part to see the dogs, and keep up with them, the interest seldom flags. In the lowlands and border counties of England, where otters are not so numerous, the fowmarte is often hunted instead with otter hounds. I was told by a subscriber to a Cumberland otter pack, that they had once run a polecat twelve miles from the place where they found his cold drag, and that a six or seven miles' chase is nothing uncommon. It must have taken the fowmarte nearly the whole night to have travelled this distance, and he is generally snug in his retreat many hours before the hounds are even laid on his track. A true otter hound will, however, catch the

scent immediately, if his game has been on the ground or in the river the previous night. The real breed, supposed to be a cross between the old English hound and a rough terrier, is very rare. They have shaggy coats of coarse wiry hair, but smooth heads and ears; in fact, a hound's head with a rough coat fit for the water. Most that we see now are either altogether rough or smooth. There is no dog more takes my fancy than one of these ancient thorough-bred otter hounds. His wierd look of hoar antiquity always associates him with "grisly eld;" and his characteristic method of working his amphibious quarry adds to the interest his appearance creates.

Terriers are best in rocky cavernous places, and seldom fail to make the otter bolt if they can get near him. From the abundance of prey, these sea-haunting otters grow to a great size; inland ones frequenting heavy dead water, where fish abound, are often large also. I never saw a finer specimen than an old male trapped the winter before last on the Thames. He was taken above Henley by a keeper, who sold him to me for a trifle.

Otters are always pretty plentiful on Loch Lomond, and some heathery rocks full of treacherous hollows, close to the water, on Inch Connachan, are called "the otter rocks," from the otters rearing their young among them every year. One of the island game watchers, a few summers ago, saw an old female, followed by two young cubs, swim from these rocks to Inch Fad, a distance of two miles. The day was very calm, and the dam swam slowly to accommodate her young. In an old channel of the Finlass Burn, a pair were often to be seen in summer disporting in the pool, nearly tepid from the heat of the sun. They seemed to be enjoying a warm bath.

The otters seldom frequented Rossdhu Bay till the autumn floods, when their sputtering blow was heard in the moonshine. Thomas A'thing, from marks of his own discovery, always knew when they were there, and the odds were that he secured them and sold their jackets before the week was out. I recollect a very large one that carried his trap into the deep, for Thomas, like a knowing otter trapper, never fastened it. A heavy rain all that night, and next day, raised the loch, and prevented him from looking for it. When the weather cleared he found his trap gone, and no float in the water to mark where it was. Phlegmatic Thomas immediately knew that the string was too short, from the loch being so high, so he "consulted his raison," settled where the trap *should* be, kept his secret till the loch grew less, then returned and found the float within ten yards of the spot he had calculated, and the otter fast in the trap at the bottom, of course drowned.

One day in July, when going to fish, I perceived an otter perfectly still on the top of the water in Loch Vennacher. It was a good way from the shore, and just opposite some steep rocks, where the black deep water was much frequented by salmon. It seemed on the watch like a cat, and it occurred to me that possibly it might be looking out for the rise of a fish, after the manner of seals. The renter of a stake-net fishery told me, that once, when watching the gambols of a large salmon, a seal put up its head at the distance of a mile, swam up in an incredibly short time, and caught the salmon. The seal has this advantage over the otter, that it can seize fish with its paws, and also break nets with them.

Great numbers of otters frequent the lochs of Lubnaig

and Vennacher, and come down in hard weather to the streams that flow out of them. I used to be much annoyed in the winter mornings, when ranging Leny and Garwhinnie waters for ducks, by people getting down before me to secure the salmon which the otter had "ta'en oot." Of course they put up all the wild fowl. After a powdering of snow the mark of a hobnailed shoe was sure to turn my course from these rivers to Loch Vennacher, as I knew full well that the enormous foot would plod down Leny water, and up Garwhinnie to the very loch, without leaving a nook undisturbed, if it only had a quarter of an hour's start of me. I had therefore to be at the river by break of day, and was rewarded by many a famous chance at the fowl, as well as frequent insight into the operations of the otter.

Many a fine fish have I seen lying on the shingle with only a few bites out of its neck; and, if undiscovered by the otter's scavengers, it was seldom honoured by a second visit from its captor. In snow, I generally saw where the otter had landed to dry himself, but he never strayed far from the river's bank, and indeed it would have been difficult walking, as he always left the mark of his belly ploughing the snow if there was only two inches on the ground.

In my early shooting days, when after wild fowl, my water dog brought me a half grown otter which he had seized in a drain. I could not at first make out what extraordinary mouthful he had picked up. When I saw it was a young otter, I brought it home alive in my game bag, intending to tame it. But the dog had broken its back, so we were obliged to have it killed. A few years after, I shot a fine male one near the same place. My

terriers came on its track in a brook. It immediately took the land a long way ahead of the dogs, and by a short cut made for the loch. I got my eye upon it slowly cantering along, intercepted and rolled it over not thirty yards from the shore.

A friend of mine last autumn was wandering along the banks of the Tweed, and seeing the dead water of a deep pool a little agitated, he peeped cautiously over. An old otter and several young ones were paddling about in perfect security and comfort. He made a slight noise, and all disappeared as if by magic, where and how he could not discover. After remaining quiet for a short time, they were all on the surface again in the same sleight of foot way. He described it as a beautiful and interesting sight, and slipped back without a second time disturbing them. He told me he had heard that Lord John Scott's otter hounds came to the pool shortly after, on purpose to hunt them, but never discovered either the dam or her young.

The ears of the otter, buried in its fur, like those of most water animals, give it something of a reptile appearance. But short ears are not always the characteristic of creatures that feed in and about water. There is an aquatic mouse, about the size and colour of a half-grown Norway rat, which has very large round transparent ears. I have often met with it when fishing the more sluggish waters of the lowlands. It is fully as expert a diver as the common water rat. When angling a shallow gravelly channel of the Ale in Selkirkshire, I saw one dive a distance of at least a dozen yards, and watched it swimming most expertly under water all the time. From its light fawn colour, it is far easier seen than the water rat. Its legs

are also longer, and its motions more light and springy. I have never observed it in any part of the highlands.

The common *Mus aquaticus* is an ugly creature, and his disgusting look is increased by the apparent deficiency of ears. I remember three being taken alive, by a water dog on the Thames, of a rich cream colour. They all haunted the same bend of the river, and were constantly noticed gamboling among the reeds before they were captured. I never saw more savage little creatures; they seemed to surpass even an imprisoned weasel in ferocity.

I have often noticed that loathsome creatures prey upon loathsome food; a favourite morsel of the water rat is a bloated toad, while a nest of earwigs are the choice tit bits of the latter. As many as forty have been taken out of a toad's maw. Sheridan's remark to a poor starved man eating shrimps is equally appropriate here—"You 're very like your meat."

The otter, like all animals that depend on the waters for prey, loses much of his address and cunning when cut off from his native element. Bewildered on land, he seems to feel that he has no fair play, and sometimes refuses to take advantage even of the resources within his reach. In the river or loch, on the contrary, he has always his wits about him, and will try every ruse ere he yields up his life. When hunted, and want of air forces him to the surface, he either takes advantage of a water leaf to cover the tip of his nose, all the rest of him being immersed, or comes up under some rotten stump precisely his own muddy colour. Flapper shooters may notice the same instinct, when they surprise a brood of ducklings, though in a far less degree. At the signal of

the mother they all dive, but come to the top again so stealthily, some under a screen of weeds, wrapped round them like a green veil, and others hidden by a hollow bank or root, that, although several are within a few yards, none may be detected until they are winded by the sagacious retriever.

FRAGMENTS.

On the Argyllshire Moors an eagle chased a hill-hare, which took shelter under a stone. The eagle watched it long, but puss was too cunning for him, and never would move so far from her hiding place as to be taken by surprise. At last her pursuer got tired out, and flew away. The white hare has always a refuge of this kind, where eagles abound, in case of danger. The common hare is seldom on very good terms with his mountain cousins. This is not much to be wondered at, for the lowlander, although proverbially timid, is very pugnacious. I once saw a battle apparently between two monkeys. On slipping quietly forward to see what this Lilliputian fight could mean, I was much amused to find it was a couple of jack hares, reared upon their hind legs, pummelling each other's heads and shoulders with right good will. The blows were sharp and true; and if all the old brown champions box the ears of their Alpine kin to the same tune, they may well fight shy of them.

The Perthshire grouse are much smaller and darker in colour than those of Argyllshire. The West Highlander is a beautiful rich red, and very large. In the low

corn districts, such as Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, and the border counties, the grouse are a very light brown, borrowing a tint from the stubbles on which they delight to feed. Snaring grouse in these counties on the "stooks," with wire no thicker than horse hair, is a very common way of poaching. Forty or fifty are often taken at a time, during the period between the corn being cut and carried. All these birds are so light in the colour as more nearly to resemble partridges. But let us take the mountain from top to bottom, and admire the wondrous care of the Divine appointments. The ptarmigan, the colour of its snowy summit in the winter time, and of the gray granite rock in summer; the grouse, lower down, exactly like its own red-brown heather in the autumn, while the partridge, which subsists upon the little patch of corn that skirts the muir, has the yellower shade of the stubble on its wing.

As the nights grow long, grouse take a far fuller evening than morning feed. In mid-winter their crops at dusk are as hard as drums. They seldom fill them in the mornings then. Black game also often content themselves with heather at this time, from scarcity of other food. Late in the year both these birds sit best when evening feed begins.

Many birds, especially those whose young ones run as soon as hatched, and, being thus dispersed, are more likely to be stumbled on, have various arts to arrest the attention of the chance wanderer, and decoy him from the brood: The lapwing is always most clamorous when you are furthest from the objects of her solicitude. So is the

curlew; but should you approach them, the mother appears quite careless and unconcerned. Grouse and partridges flutter along the ground as if wounded and unable to fly, the latter uttering a most discordant scream. I have always thought these birds overdo their part, and that the lapwing is far superior to them in the art of misleading. The manœuvres of wild ducks are similar to those of grouse, and they give notice to the ducklings when they are to dive by a loud quack, which is instantly obeyed. But the most finished actress I have seen was a mire snipe, which fluttered up exactly as if the tip of its wing was broken. It flew in this disabled manner for about ten yards, when it fell as if exhausted, and lay struggling on its side. I walked forward to seize it, muttering, "Well if they hav'n't been poaching even now." Up it rose again, apparently with the greatest difficulty. But this time it was longer in doing the tumble down part. Suspecting the trick, I followed to see how it would end. After enticing me some distance, it sprang up with its easy natural motion, and triumphantly twisted out of sight.

The hooded or Royston crow of England must either be different in its habits from that of Scotland, or naturalists of the south are much mistaken in their observations on this bird. Bewick and others make a marked difference between the Royston and carrion crows, saying, that the "former arrive with the woodcock, and take their departure in spring to breed." Now, in Scotland, there appear to me nearly as many hooded as carrion crows all summer, and *both* are called by the common people

"Hoody Craws." Nests are constantly found with one of both kinds; and I have noticed that the male is generally hooded, and the female black. The young also are mixed. Bewick says that, in more northern parts, the Royston crow remains the whole year, subsisting on sea worms, shell-fish, &c. Now I have remarked that the black crow is nearly as often to be met with on the sea shore as the Royston, and is equally fond of shell-fish. Those hooded crows on the sea shore are much lighter in the colour, and more apt to live in pairs than the inland ones, which I don't recollect ever seeing build together. I have, however, often found nests where both male and female were black. The food of *Inland* Royston and black carrion crows alike; habits the same; they are also found always in company when the young leave the nest. A gamekeeper, of some experience in trapping vermin, informs me that two Roystons and two black may be hatched in the same nest; also, that sometimes the male is hooded, and sometimes the female.

I once witnessed a touching instance of the attachment of an eagle to her young, which, like the child of some blood-thirsty chief, alone had the power to touch the single chord of tenderness and love in the heart of its cruel parent. I had wounded her mortally as she flew from her eyrie, quite unconscious of her having hatched an eaglet. Next day she returned to the foot of the rock, although not able to reach her nest, the feelings of a mother being stronger in her savage breast than either the sense of present pain, or dread of further danger.

When I lived at Lennie, my children set an old pea-hen, long solitary, with some bantam eggs Five came out, and she proved so careful a step-mother as to rear them all. Some knowing observers declared that her long legs would walk them to death. Not so, for often she carried the whole five on her back, and if any one seemed weak or flagging, she invariably took it up for long together, as a good nurse would spare her sickly child. When they were old enough to roost, she decoyed them to the large boughs of some old tree, where they continued to rest even during the long cold nights of our northern winter. She tended them with great care after they were quite able to shift for themselves, always feeding them with any pieces of bread thrown to her. The little bantams showed equal attachment to their kind protectress; and it was not till spring had far advanced that they left her to join the other poultry.

All creatures which feed upon flying insects, such as the swallow, the bat, &c., must follow and dart at their prey; and this circumstance gives an uncertain irregular cast to their own flight. There is no more curious example of these evolutions than the large greenish brown autumnal dragon-fly. This fierce dragon generally appears in August, and remains till the winter sets in. It has a beat of its own, which it plies most regularly, and its rapid darts are more like a bird of prey than an insect. You see one, perhaps, at a distance; he is close to you in an instant; at two more of his aërial bounds, he clears the adjacent plane-tree, teeming with insects; down the opposite side, round your head again, and all the while seiz-

ing gnats in his iron pincers like magic. I once caught in my hat one of these Gorgons, which gave me the opportunity from its being hampered with some load. To my surprise the booty was a middle-sized butterfly, firmly held in its forceps, and most unwillingly relinquished. The head of the poor victim was nearly separated from the body. Gnats and midges are, however, more commonly the food of the dragon-fly; and I have sometimes knocked one down with at least half a dozen in his ravenous maw. The strength of the wasp is even greater. After holding down and biting to death a fly, nearly as big as himself, I have seen him fly away with his burden quite easily. The mason wasp, also, after constructing its cylinder, will carry a caterpillar as large as itself, and deposit it above its egg for food to the young grub when it emerges. As great a feat for an insect, as the carrying off an ox for a lion or a tiger.

Some curious and interesting anecdotes of the nightingale and other soft-billed birds, during the nesting time, were mentioned to me in conversation, and I begged the kind narrator to commit them to writing. His high standing is sufficient guarantee for their authenticity.

"We never had the nightingales so near the house as this year. It was about the middle of May when, from hearing them sing constantly, and one of them almost at the door, we were led to look about for their nest, and soon found it close upon the ground, in a Virginian raspberry bush, most skilfully fenced about by the canes. It was within a very few yards of the house—not more than ten. At first we were very cautious, and looked

at it but seldom, and at a distance; but we soon found that we might be bolder, and, in fact, came to look at the bird as she was sitting, as near and as often as we pleased, without any symptom of annoying her. Quite at the beginning of June the young birds were hatched, and all went on well till the 9th, when L. M. R. hearing a loud and unusual noise from the old birds, went to look how things were going on at the nest. It seemed prodigiously full; and, upon looking close, she perceived that it was filled with an enormous rat, then in the act of devouring what remained of a young one, while both the old birds were flying and chattering over it in the most violent agitation. We soon found, however, that they had contrived to carry off four of the little ones into a place of safety, where they watched over them with most extraordinary care. For some days we could not any of us stir out of the house without the old birds instantly appearing close at our side, and following us wherever we went about the garden in the most fearless manner; and we had a little Skye terrier very like a rat at the time who had a terrible life of it, and was scolded and almost pecked wherever he went. All this went on for nearly a month without any apparent diminution of anxiety on the part of the birds, till at last the young birds grew bold, and used to come daily for crumbs at the kitchen door. One of them, indeed, in the evening came into the house, and was shut up all night; but when the windows were opened in the morning, flew against them and killed itself. This was almost the last we saw of them that year.

"Last summer (1840) a redstart built its nest in a magnolia by the side of the garden wall at Sir Henry Bun-

bury's, Barton, Suffolk. The bird laid four eggs, and then without any known cause forsook the nest. Very soon afterwards a flycatcher came, and having spread a little covering over the redstart's eggs laid one of her own. Upon this one egg she began immediately to sit; and while she was sitting a Jenny wren came and also laid one egg in the same nest. She too thereupon began to sit, and both birds sat together upon the same nest for many days, and were seen and looked at together by many persons daily. Both also hatched their young; but as the flycatcher came first, it was fledged first and flew away. Almost immediately afterwards there came at night a violent thunder storm, which, as the nest of course had not the wren's usual covering, filled it with rain, and the poor little one was drowned. In this state I saw it next morning, August 17, lying dead and soaked upon the redstart's eggs; and the whole of this story, just as I have related it, I heard two several times from Sir Henry and Lady Bunbury."

I have been told by old people who "wonned" on the banks of Loch Lomond, when adders were plentiful, that they frequently noticed these reptiles in the warm summer nights creep from the tangled brushwood, take the water, and swim in the direction of the islands. They were easily seen on their voyage, as they always kept their heads above water. There is less opportunity now of observing these "fish without fins," since the banks have been cleared and cultivated; but to this day Inch Tavannach and Inch Connachan are much infested by them, and indeed all the islands which grow copse and

heather. I had a narrow escape near the top of Inch Tavannach rock, when after blackcocks one burning day in September. I heard the creature's malignant hiss close to me, and struck it on the head with the butt of my gun. It appeared stupified, and I was in the act of tying a string round its neck, when I espied another coiled up within a yard of my hand, but quite still. I stepped back for a stick, and gave him a smart rap, which appeared to have put him also beyond further mischief, tied the other end of the string round his neck, and lifted both into my game bag. I had no success with the old cocks, so soon rowed home. My brother was standing on the quay, and bantered me about coming back with an empty bag. I denied the charge, and, in proving my point, out jumped the two adders quite alive among our fingers. We were close together at the bag-opening, but when my scaly game made its appearance, there was a clear space of ten yards at two bounds. The adders were between two and three feet long.

We chanced on another very large fellow, one hot July day, basking on Inch Moan, just where the shore and heather join. I cut him in two with a blow of my stick, and he had a frog in his stomach, which he must have sucked down head foremost like a boa-constrictor. I have little doubt they destroy quantities of young game in the same way, as they are very numerous on our moors, where I have sometimes shot them to my dog's point. Many keepers declare that they destroy the eggs of game; but I rather think an adder would be puzzled either to break them or bolt them whole. Hedgehogs both suck the eggs, and even devour the very young birds. It is therefore probable that their depredations

are often laid to the charge of the adder. My brother's gamekeeper had a pheasant's nest full of eggs consumed by one hedgehog. Expecting to find the bird sitting, he was surprised to count only six out of fourteen eggs. Next day there were only two. He therefore set a trap and caught the robber, a large hedgehog. In the highlands, however, hedgehogs are rather scarce. Not so in the lowlands. I seldom went out partridge shooting, either in Selkirkshire or East Lothian, without my dogs coming to a dead point at one of those bristly balls. And in the former county I took six out of the same hibernaculum of turnip leaves. Such numbers must do serious injury to the preserves.

The Norway rat is another formidable enemy to game, but does not so much frequent the fields till the grain is ripe. The little patches of corn which skirt Kilmun Moor are chosen resorts of these destructive creatures. The indefatigable terrier may then be seen digging at a burrow for half a day; while stealthy puss, in the twilight, more sure of carrying her point by guile, sits patiently watching another colony of Norsemen, until one of them creeps from the hole. But the rat is still more afraid of the stoat; there is no escape from him, for he can follow them to the inmost recesses of their earth. Early one morning, when looking after blackcocks on the stubble, I detected a stoat entering a rat's hole. As he had not seen me, I stood ready to shoot him, expecting his reappearance. I noticed something move on the ground, a little way off, which proved to be one of the largest male

rats I had ever seen, giving its last kick, and weltering in a pool of blood. It had been seized by the crown of the head, and no other wound was perceptible. Wishing to ascertain whether hunger or enmity was the cause of this attack, I returned after breakfast, and found the rat dragged to some distance, and its neck and shoulders devoured.

At another time, in East Lothian, I witnessed a most curious chase after a rabbit by a stoat. Close to the House of Hopes, where I was spending the summer, there are two knolls, one a low sandy one, covered with furze and broom, and all catacombed by rabbit-burrows. Standing upon the higher knoll, I perceived on the one beneath, a rabbit dotting along, with a young one, as I thought, following. It was soon plain that the little creature in the rear was a stoat. From my high position, I easily commanded a full view of the hunt. Twice did the tiny pursuer track its prey the whole round of the knoll, a distance of some hundred yards, the rabbit refusing to enter any of the numerous burrows, although it was sometimes so nearly seized as to be obliged to vault into the air to escape. At last it got a little way ahead, and took refuge in some thick brushwood. Expecting that its fate was now sealed, I ran down, and in so doing alarmed the stoat, which made off into a drain. To give the rabbit a chance for its life, I started it also, and it cantered away in an opposite direction. On telling the story to a farmer there, he said that these hunts were not unusual on that bank, but they were far more comical when the stoat was in his white winter dress. The rabbits were almost always run down, and he had trained his

sheep-dogs to attack the stoat; at which they were soon so expert as very rarely to miss being the rabbit's avenger.

The weasel, only half the size of the stoat, is more than a match for either a full-grown rabbit or rat. I was amused by an account of one of these combats, related to me by a friend, who had just witnessed it, while riding along the public road, near Wargrave, in Berkshire. A weasel had attacked a large Norway rat, which seemed to think discretion the better part of valour. As he was retreating, he always wheeled about, raising himself on his hind legs when attacked in rear. As soon as the weasel heard the sound of the horses' feet, he hid behind a wall, but the poor rat was so completely done up as to suffer himself to be seized by the tail. The English peasantry assert that there are two kinds of weasel, one very small, called "a cane," or "the mouse-killer." This idea, I have no doubt, is erroneous, and the "mouse-killers" are only the young ones of the year; numbers of these half-grown weasels appearing in summer and autumn.

There are many conjectures as to the cause of pure white or pied pheasants suddenly appearing in a preserve, which had only been stocked with the common coloured birds. The most reasonable solution seems to be that white blood, although remote, *might* appear after several generations. I have been led to think so, from seeing a whole brood of pheasants turn out milk-white, when the parents were both of the ordinary kind. More often, however, there are only one or two white birds of the same hatch. At Rossdhu, one white hen was observed

the second season after pheasants were turned out. It was unfortunately caught in a vermin-trap in the autumn. Several years elapsed before any more were seen, when one cock and two hens appeared among the other pheasants collected on the stubbles at the beginning of winter. These were most probably hatched in the same nide. Since then several more have been noticed at different periods. Pied pheasants have never been seen there, although in many places they are less uncommon than the white. I killed one, very prettily marked, in Roxburghshire, which I put up several times before getting a shot at it. The tail and wing-pinions were pure white, head, neck, and back spotted with white feathers, and legs the colour of a white fowl's. The spurs were exceedingly long and sharp, which, together with its size and brilliancy of plumage, showed it must have been very old.

As there are many preserves where neither pied nor white pheasants have ever been heard of, I am strongly of opinion that a sprinkling of white pheasants have originally been imported, which may have partially extended their ramifications. Most sportsmen will have observed something of the same kind when rabbit-shooting; a black fellow suddenly starting up amidst multitudes of the common gray. I recollect once seeing, in the middle of a populous rabbit-warren, four very young black ones, the only sable inhabitants of the colony. I have often watched them from a tree, and noted that they always kept close together, and frequented the same hole. No doubt they were of the same litter.

Quite distinct from the above is the Albino, several examples of which variety I inserted in the *Edinburgh*

Evening Courant of January last. I select the two following, as being particularly curious. "A cream-coloured hart is now roaming Lord Breadalbane's celebrated forest, the Black Mount. But perhaps the most interesting of these 'lusus' is a beautiful roe of the purest white, which haunts the tangled copses of Craig-an-James, on the banks of Loch Lomond. This fairy-like creature, so harmonizing with the romantic district it frequents, was first observed last spring, when a fawn, by the keepers of Sir James Colquhoun, of that Ilk, on whose property it is. Its eyes are red, and, what is very remarkable, it does not vary its colour according to the season. This is the more unaccountable, as the roe always changes the chestnut red of summer for the dark mouse colour of winter. This winter dress prevents the animal from being readily seen, when the coverts are thin and bare, and the trees stript of their leaves, and is one among the thousand provisions for these creatures, so defenceless and so often assailed, by the Hand that formed them all. The instinct, however, of the species leads our white-robed dryad to suppose herself, when squatted, as safe as her sober-coated companions, though her colour at once betrays her, The Alpine hare, on the contrary, not being an *exception*, but a *distinct* race, seems fully aware of its conspicuous winter appearance, and, when the snow is off the ground, always seeks to hide among the light gray rocks or thick patches of heather."

I am sorry to say that this curiosity was unable to bear the only few days of severe weather last February. It was found in a dying state among the snow, which it almost rivalled in purity. My brother has had it stuffed.

The summer before last, another red-deer calf appeared in the Black Mount, as white as a sheep. This yearling

can be made out on the hill at a mile's distance, among heather or rocks.

Should an Alpine hare be started at the base of a cairn, if unpursued, she will most likely run up to a large piece of rock, and place her back against it, watching the motions of the enemy underneath. She will remain long in this position, quite still. If the sportsman leaves his attendant at the foot of the cairn, and, by taking a circuit, comes down above, there is no danger of the hare seeing him. The only difficulty is to find out *the* rock, among so many pretty much alike, especially as its shape from above is often very different from what it appeared below. To prevent mistakes, I generally directed my game-carrier to hold out his blue bonnet in his right or left hand, to point out on which side of me the rock lay, but if it was directly below me, to place his bonnet on the ground. In a calm day, I have sometimes taken off my shoes, to prevent the hare from hearing my steps, and very seldom failed to shoot her. This miniature stalking is within the reach of many grouse-shooters, and, by trying their skill at it when the birds grow wild, they may find out whether they have any turn either for wild fowl or deer stalking.

When one of these hares is pursued by a colly or terrier, she will run round and round the hill, on her own track, trying to confound the scent, and, as a last resource, scuttle along a watercourse, if there is one near.

I have often put up the nightjar, when grouse-shooting, and once discovered its pair of unfledged young, close to

the place it rose from. It frequents rough waste ground, on the borders of cultivation, and is very fond of slopes of bracken—hence the name of fern-owl. If found in the heather, there are always copses or woods near, no doubt for the supply of large night insects they afford. When routed, by daylight, from a ferny dingle or a heathery brae, its flight is more like a leaf driven by the wind, than the spontaneous movements of a bird. Very different is its bearing in the dewy twilight of a cloudless day. It will then fly round the intruder, with a threatening attitude, often so near as almost to touch him—sometimes settling on the path, within a few yards of his feet. If traced, by its monotonous note, to a favourite perch, upon the branch of a decayed tree, it snaps its wings in taking flight, like a smiter pigeon, uttering a weak plaintive squeak. One that I winged, by opening its capacious mouth, and hissing like a cat, had a most formidable appearance, but it had no power to hurt even a child. The toes are toothed inside, to enable it to catch moths, cockchafers, &c., as it seizes prey, like owls, with its feet.

THE END.

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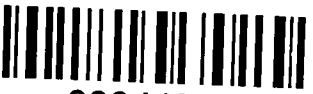
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